

LANIOTURDUS

Volume 47 No 4

November 2014

Namibia Bird Club



since 1962

Journal of the Namibia Bird Club
www.namibiabirdclub.org

Rarities and Interesting Observations

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The Kwando Carnivore Project's camera trap located near the Namibia/Zambia border in the Zambezi Region recently captured images of a group of Crested Guineafowl. This species had not been observed in Namibia for some time and it was thought that it might no longer occur in the country but these photographs confirm its continued presence.



Figure 1: Crested Guineafowl – Kwando Carnivore Project camera trap courtesy of Lise Hansen.

The winter wetland bird count at Walvis Bay held on the weekend of 19 and 20 July 2014 produced little by way of rarities with only three Red-necked Phalaropes and one (presumably overwintering) Common Redshank recorded.

In the course of the count at the Walvis Bay sewage ponds on 20 July 2014 at least forty four Maccoa Ducks were observed (the foggy conditions made counting extremely difficult). This is probably the largest congregation of this species seen at any location in Namibia for some time. (*The highest count of Maccoa Duck in Namibia was 784 individuals at Swakoppoort Dam in July 1992, surely a case of mis-identification*

because Maccoa Duck were never recorded there since. The next highest counts of Maccoa Duck are 140 individuals at Friedenau Dam in January 2002 and 129 individuals at the Walvis Bay sewage ponds in July 1996. – Ed.)

In the course of the wetland bird count at the dam at Daan Viljoen Game Reserve on 26 July 2014 a Pearl-breasted Swallow was observed. This seemed very early for this intra African migrant to be present in central Namibia. Both Pearl-breasted and White-throated Swallows were seen two weeks later at the Gammams Water Treatment Works.

A single African Black Duck was seen at Monte Christo in the course of the wetland count held there on 26 July 2014. This is an uncommon species in central Namibia but has been seen at this venue before.

Some really exciting news is that a “mystery raptor” seen in the Buffalo Core Area of the Bwabwata National Park by Etienne Marias on 28 July 2014 has been identified as a juvenile Red-necked Buzzard *Buteo auguralis*, a species believed to be new to southern Africa. This species generally occurs in a band across central Africa from northern Angola northwards but there is a small population thought to be resident in southern Angola. It later transpired that Red-necked Buzzards had been photographed before in the region without being recognized for what they were. Previous records which came to light were from the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (August 2001), Ngepi Camp (8 March 2009), Mahango Game Reserve (11 August

2012) and Chobe National Park (11 July 2014).

On 30 July 2014 Dr J Fincham recorded Dark-capped Bulbuls at Roy's Camp north-east of Grootfontein. This is somewhat south of the recognized range of this species.



Figure 2: - Dark-capped Bulbul - © Dr J Fincham.

Blue Waxbills were seen at Friedenau Dam on 03 August 2014. This seems to be a slight south westerly range extension as this species has been observed at Daan Viljoen Game Reserve and Farm Otjompauwe before.

The yellow morph Crimson-breasted Shrike at Erindi Private Game Reserve was seen again on 10 August 2014, this time by Wilfried and Sibylle Hähner. (See *Lanioturdus* 46 (3)).



Figure 3: Yellow morph Crimson-breasted Shrike - © Sibylle Hähner.

Don Ridley advised us of four Red-necked Phalaropes and a Wilson's Phalarope seen at Walvis Bay on 19 August 2014. Red-necked Phalaropes are seen there fairly regularly but Wilson's Phalarope is a mega rarity in southern Africa. There have, however, been several reports of Wilson's Phalarope at Walvis Bay over the past couple of years and one must wonder whether this is the same bird returning each time.

An atlasing bash and wetland bird count in the vicinity of Hardap Dam from 23 to 26 August 2014 turned up a number of interesting species. In addition to about fifteen Caspian Terns and twelve Kori Bustards, an African Black Duck was seen. In the Mariental and Hardap Irrigation Scheme areas interesting sightings included Spur-winged Goose, South African Cliff-Swallow, Glossy Ibis, White-faced Duck, Goliath Heron, Little Bittern, Black Crake and Sclater's Lark.

Michael Houlden photographed a pale morph Booted Eagle flying over Rocky Crest on 11 September 2014. Although not a rarity it is fairly uncommon to see eagles flying over the city.



Figure 4: Booted Eagle - © Michael Houlden.

Gavin and Marjorie Blair recorded a Common Whimbrel on the Chobe River floodplains on 12 September 2014. Inland records of this species are very unusual. They also reported six Caspian Plovers at Newbrownii Waterhole in the Etosha National Park on 21 September 2014. This is an uncommon and difficult to find species in Namibia.

Jutta Suren photographed a Spotted Eagle-Owl at Wlotzkasbaken on 25 September 2014. This seems to be the first SABAP2 record for this species on the coast.



Figure 5: Spotted Eagle-Owl - © Jutta Surén.

A Lappet-faced Vulture chick was ringed at Farm Smalhoek near Dordabis on 28 September 2014. Farm Smalhoek is a bit of a hotspot for breeding White-backed Vultures with over forty active nests being counted this season but this is the first breeding attempt by Lappet-faced Vultures on the farm of which farmer Helmuth Stehn is aware.



Figure 6: Lappet-faced Vulture chick - © Nick Steven.

Two Ludwig's Bustards were reported almost on the beach north of Cape Cross on 29 September 2014 by Gavin and Marjorie Blair. It is unusual to find these birds that close to the coast.

The camera traps at Hotsas in the Namib-Naukluft Park have started producing results. Mark Boorman invested considerable effort in sorting through more than ten thousand images and identified 73 individual tagged Lappet-faced Vultures and two tagged White-backed Vultures from 124 images of readable tags. One of the White-backed Vultures (L191) is a bird artificially raised by Liz Komen at NARREC at Brakwater and released from there on 24 December 2013. The direct distance from NARREC to Hotsas is about 180 km.

A group of five Green-capped Eremomelas was seen on 29 September 2014 at Serra Cafema Camp on the Kunene by Geoff Lockwood. These birds were a long way off their recorded Namibian

range in the Kavango and Zambezi Regions of Namibia but the species does occur in southern Angola which is presumably from where these birds originated.

Following Eckart Demasius's sighting of a Martial Eagle some 60 km east of Swakopmund (see Lanioturdus 47(3)) Hugo Haussmann recently photographed another fairly far to the west between Henties Bay and Uis.



Figure 7: Martial Eagle - © Hugo Haussmann.

Jessica Kemper reported a single White Stork at Lüderitz. The bird was first seen on 5 October 2014 and was still present on 10 October. Jessica advised that White Storks are occasionally observed around Lüderitz usually either in late March or early October suggesting that they are passage migrants.



Figure 8: White Stork - © Jessica Kemper.

The highlight of the Namibia Bird Club's morning walk at the Gammas Water Treatment Works on 12 October 2014 was the sighting of a single White-backed Duck, a very uncommon species in central Namibia and a lifer for most participants.



Figure 9: White-backed Duck - © Michael Houlden.

Eckart Demasius saw three Black-headed Herons in the hummocks just behind the beach near Wlotzkasbaken on 27 October 2014. This seems to be a very uncommon species on the Namibian coast although there are SABAP2 records from Swakopmund and Walvis Bay.



Figure 10: Black-headed Herons - © Eckart Demasius.

On 05 November 2014 Eckart Demasius saw a Black-chested Snake-Eagle just east of Kramersdorf, Swakopmund. This seems to be a somewhat unusual sighting this close to the coast.

In addition Trevor Hardaker's SA Rare Bird News Reports mention the following rarities etc. seen in Namibia since early August 2014.

A Karoo Thrush was seen at Rossmund Golf Estate just outside Swakopmund on 07 August 2014.

On 20 August 2014 a Terek Sandpiper was seen at Andoni waterhole in the Etosha National Park.

A Slaty Egret was reported at Olusandja Dam near Onesi on 21 August 2014.

Both a Black Sparrowhawk and a Bateleur were reported just outside Swakopmund in the second week of September.

The report dated 29 September 2014 makes mention of at least fifteen Red-necked Phalaropes seen at Walvis Bay while a White-browed Coucal was reported from Omaruru on 28 September 2014.

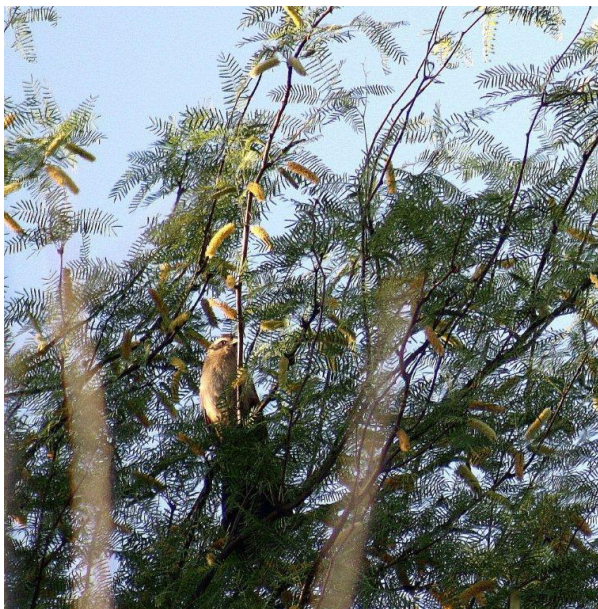


Figure 11: White-browed Coucal - © Wanda Strauss.

Four Ruddy Turnstones were reported from Okondjatu south east of Okakarara on 01 October 2014. Inland records of this species are unusual.

On the same day White-backed Duck, South African Shelduck and Black-necked Grebe were all reported on a pan about 20 km north of Gobabis. All of these species seem to be a bit off their normal recorded ranges.

An Eurasian Curlew was seen at Olusandja Dam on 03 October 2014. This species is seen at the coast more often than inland.

On 07 October 2014 an Orange-breasted Waxbill was seen in a garden in Swakopmund. This bird is a long way off its known range and suspicion exists that it may be an escapee from an aviary.

Sixteen Red-necked Phalaropes were reported to be present at Walvis Bay on 13 October 2014 while a House Crow last reported in May 2014 (see *Lanioturdus* 47(3)) was seen again in the vicinity of the yacht club.

The report dated 23 October 2014 makes mention of "Swee Waxbills" seen at the Ruacana Falls viewpoint on 29 September 2013. These birds are almost undoubtedly Angolan Waxbills. There have been several suspected sightings of this species in north-western Namibia but as yet there is no photographic evidence. (See *Lanioturdus* 41(1)).

Two European Honey-Buzzards were reported from Mahango Game Reserve on 03 November 2014.