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About the Namibia Bird Club

The Namibia Bird Club was founded in 1962 and has been active since then. The club's mission is to contribute to Namibian ornithology by, amongst other things, arranging regular birding outings, conducting bird ringing and atlasing excursions and educating the public about the value of birds. To achieve this, we organize monthly visits to interesting birding sites around Windhoek as well as regular visits to Avis Dam and the Gammams Sewage Works and occasional weekend trips further afield. Bird club members also participate in the African Waterbird Census twice a year.

Experienced birders are more than happy to help beginners and novices on these outings. If you have a transport problem or would like to share transport please contact a committee member. Depending on the availability of speakers and suitable material we present occasional lecture or video evenings at the Namibia Scientific Society premises. Members receive a digital newsletter, *Namibia Bird News*, which includes a programme of forthcoming events and the Bird Club journal, *Lanioturdus*.

The Namibia Bird Club is not affiliated to any global or regional organization and relies entirely on members' subscriptions and donations to fund its activities.

The opinions expressed in this journal are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Namibia Bird Club or its committee.

Instructions to Authors

Lanioturdus is a journal dedicated to birds and birding. Although the journal's primary focus is on Namibia, articles from other geographical parts of the globe will also be considered for publication. Authors should use common and scientific names of southern African birds as published in *Roberts' VII*. For other regions, English and scientific names following BirdLife International's species list (<http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/species>) should be used. Text should be submitted as a MS Word document. Photos, maps and figures should be sent as separate jpeg images, graphs as MS Excel charts or jpeg images and tables as MS Word or Excel documents. Please indicate in the article text where these should be placed.



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Rarities and Interesting Observations

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I normally record rarities and interesting observations in chronological order in this column. However – a series of MEGAs – one a new species for Namibia and Southern Africa - has to take priority.

Yellow-throated Leaf-loves (aka Yellow-throated Greenbuls) were photographed in the gardens of the Caprivi Houseboat Safari Lodge at Katima Mulilo on 17 February 2016. The birds had, by then, been present for a couple of weeks and had built a nest and were incubating eggs. This species has never been recorded in southern Africa before and normally occurs in Angola and Zambia about 200km north of the Namibian border. Needless to say the presence of these birds started a twitch with heavyweight birders flocking in from South Africa to see them.



Figure 1: Yellow-throated Leaf-love © Paul Gascoigne

Another MEGA put in an appearance when Chris Brown observed a young Egyptian Vulture circling overhead near the “Picture Bridge” just south of Windhoek on 24 February 2016.

And then there was a third MEGA - on 25 February 2016 a female or eclipse plumage male Garganey was

found at the Otjiwarongo sewage ponds.



Figure 2: Garganey © Neil Thomson

Next a record inadvertently left out of the previous edition of this column. On 24 October 2015 a juvenile Pallid Harrier was seen at Camp Syncro on the Kunene River. This is a long way to the west for this species which is very uncommon in Namibia.

And now a bumper crop of more recent records:-

Roddy Furlong photographed a Blue Waxbill at Ameib in the Erongo Mountains on 29 October 2015. This is very far to the west for this species in central Namibia.



Figure 3: Blue Waxbill © Roddy Furlong

On 12 November 2015 Gudrun Middendorff and I saw an Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove at Farm Teufelsbach between Windhoek and Okahandja. This sighting is about 200 km south of the nearest SABAP2 record although there were SABAP1 records in the area. This is the

second recent sighting of this species well off its accepted range. One was seen in Swakopmund in December 2014 (See *Lanioturdus* 48[1]).

The highlight of the Namibia Bird Club's outing to Monte Christo on 22 November 2015 was undoubtedly the sighting of a European Honey-Buzzard. There was, however, no sign of the Woodland Kingfishers which had been present at this site in summer for at least the previous six years.



Figure 4: European Honey-Buzzard © Madina Fourie

Hartmut Kolb reported a Yellow-bellied Greenbul at Mokuti Lodge on 24 November 2015. This is a long way from its recognized range but the species was reported in Grootfontein in 2013 (see *Lanioturdus* 46[4]).

Mark Boorman reported yet another sighting of Great White Pelican Methuselah at Walvis Bay on 24 November 2015. This bird had been ringed nearly 43 years previously by the late Dr Hu Berry on the guano platform between Walvis Bay and Langstrand. This proved to be the last reported sighting of this bird as it was found dead shortly thereafter.

A European Honey-Buzzard was seen in Klein Windhoek on 27 November 2015 (picture posted on Facebook) and Gudrun Middendorff and I saw another at Farm Teufelsbach some 45

km north of Windhoek on 29 November 2015.

Lüderitz continued producing weird and wonderful birds with Jessica Kemper being called out on 29 November 2015 to rescue a "seabird" from a garden. The bird turned out to be a juvenile Little Bittern which was subsequently released in a wetland near the prison.



Figure 5: Little Bittern © Jessica Kemper



Figure 6: Little Bittern © J-P Roux

Phil Palmer reported a Tree Pipit at Halali on 29 November 2015 and Common Whitethroats at Okaukuejo on 29 November and at Namutoni on 01 December 2015.



Figure 7: Tree Pipit © Phil Palmer (Bird Holidays, UK)



Figure 8: Common Whitethroat, Okaukuejo © Phil Palmer (Bird Holidays, UK)



Figure 9: Common Whitethroat, Namutoni © Phil Palmer (Bird Holidays, UK)

The atlasing expedition to the Tsaukhaeb (Sperrgebiet) National Park undertaken by Holger and Claire Kolberg, Bernard and Antje Madden,

Mark Boorman and Hartmut Kolb produced some interesting sightings. In addition to finding Gray's Larks nearly 100 km south of their known range they found a partially leucistic Black-necked Grebe near the Orange River Mouth on 01 December 2015, two Karoo Thrushes at the Gabusib patrol shelter on 07 December and three Red-footed Kestrels (a male, a female and an immature bird) on the Lüderitz/Rosh Pinah power line near the Tsaus Mountains on 09 December.

On 04 December 2015 Judy Fuller saw a coucal in her Ludwigsdorf garden. This bird was, in all probability, a Senegal Coucal given that certain individuals of this species seem prone to wandering. There have been previous records from Sonnleiten (east of Windhoek), Omaruru, Namutoni and Farm Kakuse northwest of Tsumeb, all well off the usual range.

A report of a seemingly lost Spotted Flycatcher on Mercury Island was posted on Facebook on 09 December 2015.

Gudrun Middendorff and I saw a European Honey-Buzzard about 70 km east of Windhoek on 10 December 2015.

The Namibia Bird Club's final outing of the year to the Gammams Water Treatment Works on 13 December 2015 produced, in addition to a substantial list of common species, several very interesting birds. Among the uncommon birds seen were an Osprey, at least two White-backed Ducks, two Little Bitterns and a Pied Kingfisher. The highlights were, however, two Glossy Ibises and a Woodland Kingfisher. I am not aware of any previous Glossy Ibis records for this area although it was later learned that these birds had been

present since at least 22 November (There is a record of a single Glossy Ibis at Monte Christo in December 2006 – Ed). Woodland Kingfishers have been present at Monte Christo about 30 km north of Windhoek for the last six summers but the birds seem to be absent there this year. Gudrun Middendorff got a glimpse of one and all participants heard it calling but attempts to lure it into the open with a recording of its call proved fruitless.



Figure 10: Glossy Ibis © Sibylle Hähner



Figure 11: Pied Kingfisher © Sibylle Hähner

Mark Boorman and Franz Klein saw a Eurasian Oystercatcher at Walvis Bay on 21 December 2015.

In the course of atlasing at Farm Voigtskirch north east of Windhoek on 22 December 2015 Gudrun Middendorff and I found a Dwarf Bittern, a very uncommon species in central Namibia.



Figure 12: Dwarf Bittern © Neil Thomson

Werner von Maltzahn reported a Corn Crake at Farm Hüttenhof in the Otavi area on 24 December 2015. This is possibly only the fourth record of this species in Namibia.



Figure 13: Corn Crake © Stefan Ringelmann

Madina Fourie photographed another European Honey-Buzzard at Farm Prospect in the Khomas Hochland on 25 December 2015.



Figure 14: European Honey-Buzzard © Madina Fourie

Dirk Heinrich reported seeing Red-billed Firefinches at Farm Wiese east of Rehoboth in late December 2015. This is a further range extension for this species.

Chris Brown found another European Honey-Buzzard at Midgard east of Okahandja on 27 December 2015.

Eckart Demasius, in the course of his year-end trip to the Etosha National Park, found a Black-winged Pratincole at Andoni on 28 December 2015 and a White-headed Vulture at Fischer's Pan on the same day. The following day he saw a Pallid Harrier at Okondeka. Another interesting sighting was that of a Pied Crow with a raptor like bill seen at Rietfontein on 27 December 2015.



Figure 15: Black-winged Pratincole © Eckart Demasius



Figure 16: White-headed Vulture © Eckart Demasius



Figure 17: Pallid Harrier © Eckart Demasius



Figure 18: Pied Crow - © Eckart Demasius

Mark Boorman found a Franklin's Gull at Mile 4 Saltworks on 30 December 2015.



Figure 19: Franklin's Gull - © Mark Boorman

Gudrun Middendorff, Franz Klein and I saw Blue Waxbills on Farm Lichtenstein south west of Windhoek on 30 December 2015. This is possibly a slight southerly range extension for this species.

Tarry Butcher photographed another Corn Crake at Le Mirage Desert Lodge near Sossusvlei on 31 December 2015. This is the second record of this extremely rare species in Namibia in a short space of time (see above).



Figure 20: Corn Crake © Tarry Butcher

Farmer Hans-Dieter Wiss informed us that for the first time ever he had heard Woodland Kingfishers calling at Farm Otjiseva, the northern neighbour of Farm Monte Christo (see above). On 01 January 2016 we also heard this species calling at this location and in addition found a single Black Stork there.

Ulrich Hofmann caught and ringed a Cutthroat Finch at Farm Kakuse some 70 km northwest of Tsumeb on 02 January 2016. There is only one other SABAP2 record for this species in that part of the country.



Figure 21: Cutthroat Finch © Ulrich Hofmann

Jo Tagg photographed a Black-cheeked Lovebird in his Klein Windhoek garden on 03 January 2016. This bird is almost undoubtedly an escapee but Black-cheeked Lovebirds have been photographed in Klein Windhoek before (see *Lanioturdus* 46[2]). The blue rump, however, suggests that this particular bird is probably a hybrid Rosy-faced x Black-cheeked Lovebird.



Figure 22: Black-cheeked Lovebird © Jo Tagg

Ursula Franke-Bryson saw a Baillon's Crake at Farm Okatjerute in the Witvlei area on 03 January 2016.

Madina Fourie photographed a male Maccoa Duck in the Uniab River pools near Torra Bay on 04 January 2016. Maccoa Ducks were recorded on the northern coast in SABAP1, presumably in the wetlands associated with the ephemeral rivers.

The species has, until now, been recorded in that area only near Möwe Bay in SABAP2.



Figure 23: Maccoa Duck © Madina Fourie

On 07 January 2016 Hugo Haussmann observed a breeding pair of Blue Cranes at Salvadora waterhole in the Etosha National Park. There appeared to be three eggs in the nest which would be unusual as normally a clutch comprises only two eggs. Paul Gascoigne and Helen Pooley saw this nest on 14 February 2016 and it then contained only two eggs. The elapsed time between these sightings (38 days) suggests that the first clutch was lost and that the birds had laid a second clutch.



Figure 24: Blue Crane at nest © Hugo Haussmann

I saw two Red-billed Oxpeckers on an animal about 70 km west of Rundu on 11 January 2016. This seems to be a significant westward range extension of about 60 km from the westernmost SABAP2 record for this species.

On 14 January 2016, in the course of the wetland bird count at Hardap Dam, Holger Kolberg found fifteen Pink-backed Pelicans, seven Greater Flamingoes and an Osprey. The following day he found two more Pink-backed Pelicans at Naute Dam.

Gudrun Middendorff saw two African Openbills flying over the northern parts of Windhoek on 15 January 2016. Could this be the start of another irruption of this species in areas where it does not normally occur as happened a few years ago?

Jutta Suren recorded Village Indigobird at Omeya south of Windhoek on 16 January 2016. This seems to be a further range extension for this brood parasite of the Red-billed Firefinch which is also extending its range rapidly. Dawid van der Merwe later confirmed that he had seen Red-billed Firefinches at Omeya.



Figure 25: Village Indigobird © Jutta Suren

Eckart Demasius photographed a Cape Crow at Wlotzkasbaken on 17 January 2016 – a very unusual species for the area.



Figure 26: Cape Crow © Eckart Demasius

The sighting of a Village Indigobird in Karibib on 18 January 2016 was posted on the Birds of Namibia Facebook page. This is another significant range extension. Two days later the observer reported Red-billed Firefinches at the same location.

On 21 January 2016 Gudrun Middendorff saw a European Honey-Buzzard at Avis Dam.

The inland wetland bird counts on 23 and 24 January 2016 produced a few interesting sightings. Two Black Storks, a Little Bittern, a Greater Painted-Snipe and a Woodland Kingfisher (see above) were seen at Monte Christo while Gammams Water Treatment Works produced two Purple Herons, an Osprey, a European Honey-Buzzard and an African Openbill. The openbill was most probably one of those seen flying over Windhoek on 15 January (see above). A pair of African Fish-Eagles was seen at Hoffnung Dam (Heja Lodge). This species has not been recorded there before in SABAP2 and I can't help wondering whether this is the Avis Dam pair which seems to have abandoned the now dry Avis Dam.

Anja Denker saw a yellow morph Crimson-breasted Shrike near Seis on the fourth weekend in January 2016.

Eckart Demasius found a Pallid Harrier at Mariental on 25 January 2016.

Chantelle Bosch saw a Red-necked Falcon in Swakopmund on 25 January 2016. This is an uncommon species in Namibia and was not recorded on the central coast in SABAP1 and neither has it been recorded there in SABAP2.

On 29 January 2016 Franz Klein, Michael Houlden and Anita Zimny saw a strange tern at Mile 4 Saltworks. The bird was about the size of a Swift Tern but had an orange bill. Expert opinion seems to be that this bird is in all likelihood a Royal Tern.



Figure 27: Strange Tern © Michael Houlden

In the course of the wetland bird counts at Walvis Bay on 30 and 31 January 2016 four Red-necked Phalaropes, five Eurasian Oystercatchers and ten Eurasian Curlews were seen. In addition twenty eight Cape Shovelers were seen on the lagoon – a rather unusual species in the marine environment. The count at the Cape Cross Lagoons on 01 February revealed a further two Red-necked Phalaropes.

Mark Boorman found an Elegant-type Tern at Mile 4 Saltworks on 08 February 2016. There is a strong

possibility that this bird is a hybrid Elegant x Sandwich Tern.

Franz Klein reported a European Honey-Buzzard in his Eros garden on 09 February 2016.

Also on 09 February 2016 Mark Boorman found what appeared to be a Lesser Crested Tern at Mile 4 Saltworks. Given the incidence of suspect “orange” billed terns it is quite likely that this bird is a hybrid Sandwich x Lesser Crested Tern.



Figure 28: “Lesser Crested” Tern © Mark Boorman

Mel Kelly advised that she had seen both Red-billed Firefinches and Village Indigobirds at Finkenstein Estate east of Windhoek in the first weeks of February 2016. This indicates an eastward expansion from Windhoek of both host and brood parasite.

Paul Gascoigne and Helen Pooley saw a White-headed Vulture between Dolomite Camp and Charl Marais Dam in the Etosha National Park on 13 February 2016. Among their other interesting sightings in the park were a single Wooly-necked Stork at Tsumcor waterhole and Yellow Wagtails between Rietfontein and Halali and also near the neck of Fischer’s Pan all on 15 February 2016.

The Namibia Bird Club’s morning walk at the Gammams Water Treatment Works on 14 February 2016 turned up a number of species which are uncommon in central Namibia. These included White-backed Duck, Purple Heron, Little Bittern, Osprey and Pied Kingfisher. The highlight however, was the sighting of at least five but possibly six or more African Openbills.

Paul Gascoigne reported another European Honey-Buzzard at Avis Dam on 18 February 2016 and three White-backed Ducks and at least five African Openbills at Gammams Water Treatment Works on 19 February 2016.



Figure 29: African Openbill © Paul Gascoigne

Gudrun Middendorff observed a European Honey-Buzzard flying over Klein Windhoek on 19 February 2016.

Gudrun Middendorff and I travelled to Otjiwarongo on 27 February 2016 to see the Garganey at the sewage ponds (see above). In addition to finding our target bird we also saw Yellow Wagtail, Collared Pratincole, Dwarf Bittern, Greater Painted-Snipe, White-faced Duck and European Roller, all uncommon birds in central Namibia. Other observers also found an African Crake there.



Figure 30: Collared Pratincole © Neil Thomson



Figure 31: European Roller © Neil Thomson

On 03 March 2016 Eckart Demasius found Temminck's Coursers between the road and railway line just east of Wilhelmstal. This is not a common species in central Namibia.



Figure 32: Temminck's Courser © Eckart Demasius

In addition Trevor Hardaker's SA Rare Bird News Reports mention the following rarities etc. seen in Namibia since mid November 2015:-

Two Eurasian Oystercatchers and a Franklin's Gull were seen at Walvis Bay on 14 November 2015 and there was also another report of the alien House Crow at the town. The House Crow was reported again the following weekend.

A Tree Pipit was seen at Okaukeujo in the Etosha National Park on 16 November 2015. The bird was present until at least 20 November.

A Karoo Thrush was reported in a garden in Lüderitz on 16 November 2015.

A Spotted Crake was seen at Rundu sewage works on 27 November 2015.

At least five Red-necked Phalaropes were reported to be present at Walvis Bay on the first weekend of December 2015.

A European Honey-Buzzard was seen in Katimo Mulilo on 06 December 2015.

Another European Honey-Buzzard was reported at Avis Dam on 08 December 2015.

Three Eurasian Oystercatchers were seen at Walvis Bay on 22 December 2015.

Twenty to thirty Caspian Plovers were seen outside King Nehale Gate, the northern entrance to the Etosha National Park, on 22 December 2015.

European Honey-Buzzards were reported at Auasblick and east of Windhoek on 30 December 2015 and at Gammams Water Treatment Works on 31 December 2015.

A Marsh Owl was seen at Palmwag on 31 December 2015.

There was another European Honey-Buzzard sighting in Pioneers Park, Windhoek, on 04 January 2016.

The report dated 15 January 2016 mentions a number of rarity sightings in Namibia over an extended period. A Spotted Crake was seen at Namutoni on 23 December 2015 while an African Crake was observed at Kunene River Lodge on 30 December. The period 04 to 05 January 2016 produced sightings of a White-rumped Sandpiper, an American Golden Plover, two Black-tailed Godwits and several Red-necked Phalaropes at Walvis Bay.

An African Crake was found in a garden in Academia, Windhoek, on 15 January 2015.

Another European Honey-Buzzard was located in Olympia, Windhoek, on 03 February 2016.

Forty four Red-necked Phalaropes were seen at Walvis Bay on 06 February 2016.

A rather wayward Southern Carmine Bee-eater was observed at Ameib Ranch north of Usakos on 08 February 2016.

At least three Spotted Crakes were discovered at the Katima Mulilo sewage works on 16 February 2016.

Another Lesser Crested-type Tern was seen at Mile 4 Saltworks on 19 February 2016.

Four Red-necked Phalaropes, two Eurasian Oystercatchers and a Common Redshank were reported at Walvis Bay on 20 February 2016.

A further European Honey-Buzzard was seen at Katima Mulilo on 26 February 2016.

A Lesser Black-backed Gull was found at Rehoboth Sewage ponds on 28 February 2016.

A Spotted Crake was found at the Otjiwarongo sewage ponds on 04 March 2016 by people searching for the Garganey (which they failed to find).