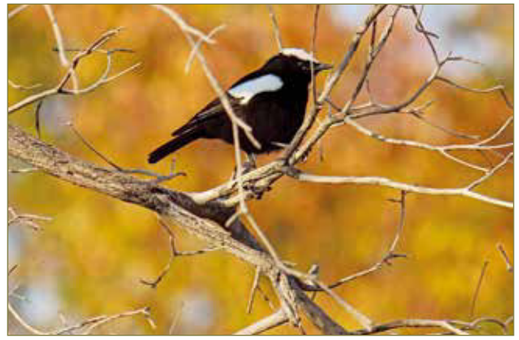
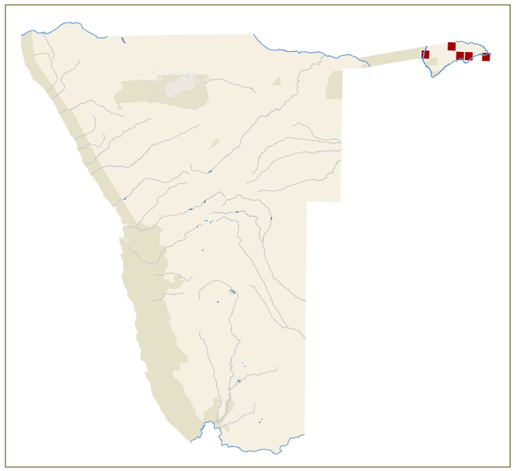


© Jutta Surén

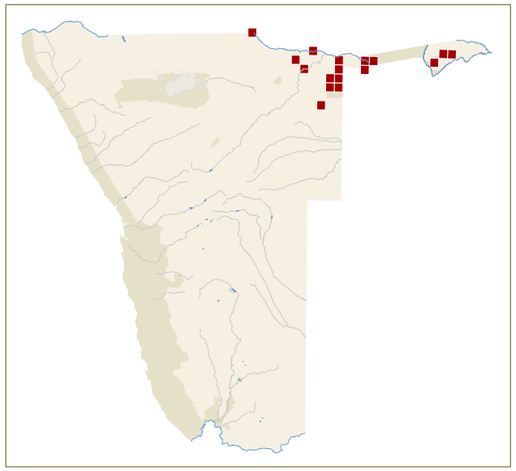
require further research and this rare species requires monitoring as it may need to be elevated to threatened status in the near future.

Miombo Blue-eared Starling (Lesser Blue-eared Starling) | *Lamprotornis elisabeth (Lamprotornis chloropterus)*



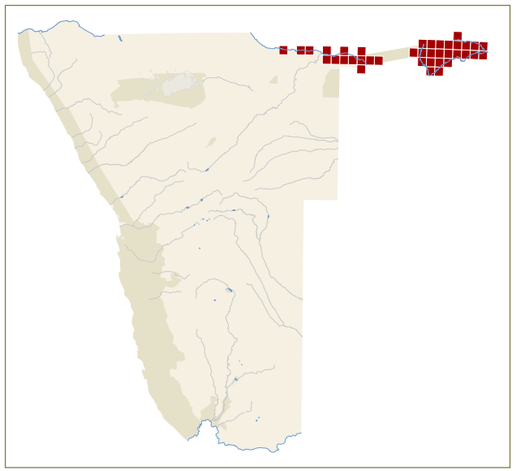
A difficult species to distinguish from the Greater Blue-eared Starling *L. chalybaeus*, this bird is found mainly in Zimbabwe, but with scattered records from the Zambezi region (Tree 1997h). It is found in the mixed arid (broad-leaved) and Mopane woodlands adjacent to the rivers, and it is more likely to form large flocks than the other two glossy starlings here, the Cape Glossy Starling (Glossy Starling) *L. nitens* and the Greater Blue-eared Starling (Tree 1997h). Its reporting rate is 5% in these areas and its area of occupancy is 2,800 km², of which only 4% occurs in protected areas of Mudumu National Park (Jarvis *et al.* 2001). Because of its widespread distribution in sub-Saharan Africa's woodlands it is not a conservation priority in Namibia.

Sharp-tailed Starling | *Lamprotornis acuticaudus*



This species differs from the other glossy starlings by its orange or red eyes and wedge-shaped tail (Underhill & Brown 1997b). Its southern African range only encompasses the Kavango and Caprivi sandveld region of Namibia and adjacent areas of Botswana (Underhill & Brown 1997b). Elsewhere it is found in Angola, Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. It is rarely reported, with an average reporting rate of 12% and a maximum reporting rate of 36% at Khaudum camp. It occupies an area of 9,400 km², of which 48% occurs in the protected area of Mahango in the Bwabwata National Park and in the Khaudum National Park (Jarvis *et al.* 2001). There, it is resident in the mature deciduous broad-leafed woodland, especially the *Burkea-Pterocarpus* habitat (Brown 1990). A small population was found in 2011 in Mopane woodlands some 40 km south-west of Katima Mulilo at a density of about 20 birds per 10 km² (Brown 2012b). Another population has been found in the vicinity of Shamvura in the Kavango East region (Paxton 2014). Population size could be gleaned from flocks that form after breeding, which takes place from November to March (Underhill & Brown 1997b). Little is known about its breeding biology (Craig 2005). Seven breeding records for Namibia have egg-laying in October (one) November (three) and December (three) (Brown *et al.* 2015). One nest containing chicks was monitored during December 2011 (Paxton 2014). The nest was located in a sheltered nest hole in the dead branch of a *Guiboutia coleosperma* tree growing in a mahangu field. There were sub-adult cooperative helpers at the nest and the birds were not disturbed by nearby plowing activities. Brood size and breeding success could not be ascertained.

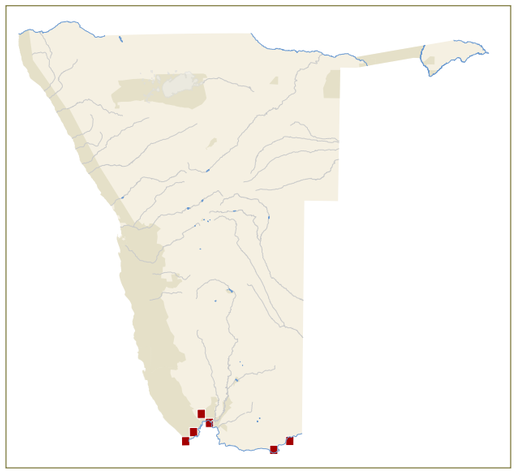
Red-billed Oxpecker | *Buphagus erythrorynchus*



Accurate population figures for this species were derived from two sets of counts undertaken on the two oxpecker species found in the Caprivi Strip, the only area of Namibia in which they both occur (Mundy 1997f). An increase in numbers was recorded over a 15-year period, with an estimated 3,627 to 4,902 birds recorded in 1997 and 1998 (Robertson & Jarvis 2000), compared with 2,285 to 3,780 birds recorded in 1983 and 1984 (Stutterheim & Panagis 1985, Brown & Brown 1987). They are most numerous around the Okavango River and the river systems of the Zambezi region, where their main modern-day host, domestic cattle, increased at least three-fold in the same time period (Mendelsohn & Roberts 1997, Robertson & Jarvis 2000). They appear to be unaffected by reduced rainfall and increasing frequency of fire; factors that may have caused the decline in the red-listed Yellow-billed Oxpecker *B. africanus* populations in the same areas (Robertson & Jarvis 2000). Red-billed Oxpeckers occupy an area of 18,000 km² in Namibia, of which 65% falls into conservation areas. Many locations are well away from the riverine systems favoured by the Yellow-billed Oxpecker (Robertson & Jarvis 2000). The species was listed as *Near Threatened* in South Africa due to the historical decline in range size induced by arsenic-based cattle dips that killed ticks as well as oxpeckers (Barnes 2000a). This may have occurred in Namibia, but the more traditional farming methods in the rural north-east make this less likely. Populations have rebounded in South Africa and the species was recently downgraded there to *Least Concern* (Taylor *et al.* in press). Red-billed Oxpeckers are not threatened in Namibia, but any population assessment of the *Endangered* Yellow-billed Oxpecker should include this species.

© Ken Oake Game Studios (Botswana) Pty Ltd

Malachite Sunbird | *Nectarinia famosa*



This common species is found from the Ethiopian highlands southwards to South Africa, where reporting rates are above 35% over much of its large range (Fraser 1997a). It just touches the Namibian border along the Orange River from the mouth (where it is common in gardens in Oranjemund) east to about 20°E. It occupies an area of 1,800 km², of which 25% occurs within the