

**"STANLEY'S BUSTARD" IN ETOSHA NATIONAL PARK,
THE FIRST RECORD OF JACKSON'S BUSTARD IN
ETOSHA**

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The bustard *Neotis denhami* is widespread in Africa. It occurs in a belt of moist and dry woodland north of the equator, from Senegal to Ethiopia. South of the equator it is found in open grassland within the belt of moist woodland south to 20° S. There is an isolated population in South Africa, south of 24° S, extending down the east and south coast to Cape Town (Snow 1978).

The South African birds belong to the subspecies *N.d. stanleyi* and are called Stanley's Bustards (Clancey 1980; Maclean 1993).

Neotis denhami also occurs, albeit rather sparsely, in northwestern Zimbabwe, northern Botswana and in northern Namibia. These birds belong to the subspecies *N.d. jacksoni* and are called Jackson's Bustards. They apparently occur seasonally, in small numbers as non-breeding visitors, probably from the high interior of Angola, northern and northeastern Zambia and northern Malawi (Clancey 1980; Harrison, *et al.* 1997).

In Namibia, all recent records of *N. denhami* are from the East Caprivi, mainly from the grasslands of the Mamili National Park (e.g. Maclean 1992, in January 1991), but also from the Salambala area just north of the Chobe River near Ngoma, as well as the Mahango Game Reserve in April/May (CJH Hines pers. comm.). There are historic records of the birds in the Ovambo region (Brown 1993), and Finch-Davies (1918) collected specimens on grassy flats near Namakunde and Ondangwa in February 1917. There are no subsequent records for this region.

On 10 November 1997, I saw two Jackson's Bustards at Andoni waterhole on the grassy Andoni Plains, some 40 km north of Namutoni camp in

Etosha National Park (1816Db). The birds were about 50 m from me, loafing in the early morning sun, then walking off slowly hunting across the grasslands. The birds were noticeably larger than Ludwig's Bustards *Neotis ludwigii* and had extensive white and black markings on the wings and prominent barring on the tail. The crown was black and the throat of one of the birds was grey.

This is the first record of Stanley's/Jackson's Bustard in Etosha, and the first record for the north-central region of Namibia in 80 years. The presence of the birds follows a good rainy season in early 1997 and well-developed grasslands on the Andoni Plains. To the north, in the Ondangwa to Namakunde areas where the species had previously been recorded, the human population and their livestock have increased manifold, to the extent that there is unlikely to be both suitable habitat and undisturbed conditions for survival by these large bustards.

Park staff and visitors to Etosha should monitor the grassy plains to the north of Etosha Pan to determine whether this is a once-off record, or whether the area supports a small number of non-breeding visitors each year.

References

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