

LANIOTURDUS

Volume 49 No 1

March 2016

Namibia Bird Club



since 1962

Journal of the Namibia Bird Club
www.namibiabirdclub.org

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.



LANIOTURDUS

Vol. 49 (1) 2016

March 2016

www.namibiabirdclub.org

CONTENTS

KOLBERG H	Editorial 1
BROWN C	The status of breeding data on the birds of Namibia..... 2
OSCHADLEUS HD	Eye colour in weavers 9
GASCOIGNE P and H POOLEY	Kunene River Lodge in search of the Cinderella Waxbill and Angola Cave Chat... 10
THOMSON N	Atlasing Bash: Farm Habis and Karibib vicinity, 22 to 25 May 2015..... 13
DEMASIUS E	The incredible effectiveness of vultures 15
DEMASIUS E	How a springbok birth turned into a birding story..... 16
THOMSON N	Rarities and Interesting Observations 17
KOLBERG H	Book Review: Birds of Botswana 28

The status of breeding data on the birds of Namibia

Chris Brown

chrisbrown.namibia@gmail.com

Introduction

In January 2014 I put out a request for previously un-submitted breeding information on Namibia's birds (Brown 2014). Many people kindly responded to this request and, over the past year, an additional 3 382

new laying-date records were added to the data set representing over 5 000 nests. This has increased the laying date data set for Namibia by 26%. An additional 2 283 new clutch-size records were also added to the data set (Table 1).

Dates of analysis	Egg-laying dates		Clutch sizes
	Number records	Number nests	Number records
January 2014	13 017	3 279 083	97 386
January 2015	16 399	3 284 119	99 669
Information added	3 382	5 036	2 283

An analysis of all the breeding data on Namibia's birds has now been completed (Brown *et al.* 2015). The publication can be downloaded at <http://oo.adu.org.za/content.php?id=185>. This allows us to look at the status of bird breeding information and to identify gaps.

Results

Of the 687 bird species recorded to date for Namibia 162 are non-breeding migrants, pelagics and vagrants (Table 2). Eleven species could possibly breed in Namibia but, on current evidence, are considered unlikely to do so (Table 3). That

leaves a total of 514 bird species likely to breed in Namibia.

Of the likely breeding birds, 449 species (87.4%) have been confirmed to breed in Namibia. Sixty-five species (12.6%) of birds expected to breed in Namibia have not yet been recorded doing so (Table 4). Of the 449 species confirmed breeding in Namibia, 24 species have insufficient information to establish accurate breeding data such as laying month and clutch size (Table 5). There are 425 breeding species in Namibia with at least one record of egg-laying month.

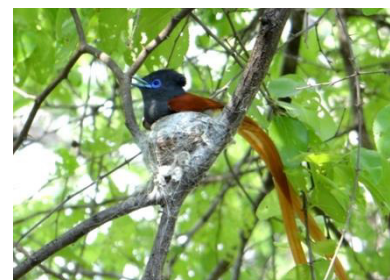


Table 2: Number of non-breeding and breeding birds in Namibia and number of breeding records.

Breeding status		No. species	%	Percent of the 514 species likely to breed in Namibia	
1. Birds that do not breed in Namibia (non-breeding migrants, pelagics and vagrants)		162	23.6		
2. Birds that could possibly breed in Namibia, but are considered unlikely to do so (Table 3)		11	1.6		
3. Birds expected to breed in Namibia but which have not yet been confirmed to do so (Table 4)		65	9.5	12.6	12.6
4. Birds confirmed breeding in Namibia but with no details on laying dates (Table 5)		24	3.5	4.7	87.4
5. Birds confirmed breeding in Namibia and with breeding information on laying dates (see www.the-eis.com/breeding-birds.php)	< 10 records	188	61.8	36.6	
	10-19 records	67		13.0	
	20-29 records	36		7.0	
	30-39 records	21		4.1	
	40-49 records	24		4.7	
	50-74 records	30		5.8	
	75-99 records	22		4.3	
	100+ records	37		7.2	
	Total	425		81.3	
Overall total		687			

Table 3: Bird species that could possibly breed in Namibia but are considered, on the strength of current knowledge, unlikely to do so.

Australasian Gannet	Cape Clapper Lark	Angola Swallow
Eurasian Bittern	Karoo Lark	Croaking Cisticola
Crowned Eagle	Dusky Lark	Cardinal Quelea
Ross's Turaco	Eastern Saw-wing	

Table 4: Bird species expected to breed in Namibia but for which there are as yet no confirmed records.

Woolly-necked Stork	Crowned Hornbill	Stierling's Wren-Warbler
African Cuckoo-Hawk	Trumpeter Hornbill	Cinnamon-breasted Warbler
Black Harrier	Brown-backed Honeybird	Chinspot Batis
African Goshawk	Greater Honeyguide	Amethyst Sunbird
African Hobby	Olive Woodpecker	Malachite Sunbird
Crested Guinea-fowl	African Broadbill	Southern Double-collared Sunbird
Red-chested Flufftail	Flappet Lark	African Yellow White-eye
Denham's Bustard	Large-billed Lark	Grey-headed Bushshrike
Lesser Jacana	Wood Pipit	Orange-breasted Bushshrike
Black-cheeked Lovebird	Plain-backed Pipit	African Golden Oriole
Thick-billed Cuckoo	Rosy-throated Longclaw	Common Myna
Red-chested Cuckoo	White-breasted Cuckoo-Shrike	Yellow-throated Petronia
African Emerald Cuckoo	Cape Bulbul	Cape Weaver
Coppery-tailed Coucal	Eastern Nicator	Orange-winged Pytilia
White-browed Coucal	Red-capped Robin-Chat	Jameson's Firefinch
Black Coucal	Angola Cave Chat	Orange-breasted Waxbill
Swamp Nightjar	Collared Palm-Thrush	Bronze Mannikin
Pennant-winged Nightjar	Bearded Scrub-Robin	Cuckoo Finch

Narina Trogon	Sickle-winged Chat	Broad-tailed Paradise Whydah
Brown-hooded Kingfisher	Red-faced Cisticola	Purple Indigobird
African Pygmy-Kingfisher	Namaqua Warbler	Yellow-fronted Canary
Half-collared Kingfisher	Yellow-breasted Apalis	

Table 5: Bird species confirmed breeding in Namibia but for which there is insufficient information to derive laying dates and clutch sizes.

White-faced Whistling Duck	Coqui Francolin	Eastern Black-headed Oriole
Hottentot Teal	Cape Spurrow	Miombo Blue-eared Starling
Bat Hawk	Baillon's Crake	Common Starling
Hooded Vulture	Alpine Swift	White-winged Widowbird
African Harrier-Hawk	Green-backed Honeybird	Fan-tailed Widowbird
Black Sparrowhawk	Terrestrial Brownbul	Cinderella Waxbill
African Marsh Harrier	Little Rush Warbler	Cut-throat Finch
Ovambo Sparrowhawk	Green-capped Eremomela	Pin-tailed Whydah

While 16 396 breeding records representing over 3.284 million clutches may seem a large set of data, when looked at across all 514 breeding bird species in Namibia it can be seen that only 134 species (26%) have more than 30 records, only 89 species (17%) have more than 50 records and only 37 species (7%) have 100 or more records (Table 2). While this shows that considerably more breeding information is needed on Namibia's birds, we can take heart from the fact that, in 1979 when Charles Clinning compiled a

summary of breeding information on Namibia's birds there were only 239 species with breeding information and only seven species had more than 50 records. In 1987 the comparative figures were 289 and 20 species respectively (Brown 1987) and in 2015, 425 and 89 species respectively (Table 6). This means that, of the 514 species expected to breed in Namibia, the percentage of species with no breeding information fell from 53% in 1979 to 44% in 1987 to 17% in 2015.

Table 6: Comparison of breeding information on the birds of Namibia over the past 35 years

Date	Sources	No. nest record cards	No. breeding publications	No breeding records	Approx no. nests (million)	No species with breeding data	No. spp with > 50 records
1979	Clinning	2 484	101	2 477	-	239	7
1987	Brown	5 000	142	5 148	1.5	289	20
2015	Brown <i>et al.</i>	7 230	305	16 399	3.284	425	89

For some species there are a large number of breeding records (Table 7), e.g. laying months for Lappet-faced Vulture (1 274 records), Damara Tern (1 073) and White-backed Vulture (872). However, there remain far too

many species with no or too few records to provide a meaningful understanding of their breeding. Collection of breeding information remains important for improving our understanding of the biology of many

species. This should be a particular priority for endemic (Table 8) and Red

Data (Table 9) species.

Table 7: The 37 bird species with more than 100 egg-laying month and clutch-size records in Namibia			
Laying month		Clutch size	
Species	No. records	Species	No. clutches
Lappet-faced Vulture	1,274	Lesser Flamingo	50,500
Damara Tern	1,073	Greater Flamingo	27,000
White-backed Vulture	872	African Penguin	2,797
White-fronted Plover	407	Hartlaub's Gull	1,104
Southern Masked Weaver	295	Lappet-faced Vulture	1,069
White-breasted Cormorant	270	Cape Cormorant	1,019
African Penguin	211	Damara Tern	1,012
Red-knobbed Coot	211	Swift Tern	906
Laughing Dove	210	Red-billed Quelea	773
Common Ostrich	203	Wattled Starling	655
White-browed Sparrow-Weaver	174	Cape Gannet	639
Rock Martin	165	Pied Avocet	602
Lesser Moorhen	164	Great White Pelican	590
Crowned Lapwing	163	Black-necked Grebe	429
African Reed Warbler	149	Kelp Gull	361
Monteiro's Hornbill	148	Grey Heron	295
Chestnut Weaver	145	White-fronted Plover	298
Namaqua Sandgrouse	143	Southern Masked Weaver	295
Little Grebe	141	White-breasted Cormorant	291
Pale Chanting Goshawk	133	Whiskered Tern	246
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow	129	African Openbill	231
Cape Crow	128	African Darter	203
Grey Heron	128	Laughing Dove	178
Greater Kestrel	128	Red-knobbed Coot	157
Lark-like Bunting	121	Chestnut Weaver	149
Kelp Gull	118	South African Cliff Swallow	147
Cape Cormorant	116	African Reed Warbler	147
Acacia Pied Barbet	116	Lesser Moorhen	144
Blacksmith Plover	116	Crowned Lapwing	140
Black-chested Prinia	109	Rock Martin	131
African Red-eyed Bulbul	107	Common Ostrich	114
Cape Turtle Dove	107	White-browed Sparrow-Weaver	116
African Grey Hornbill	106	Lark-like Bunting	115
Kittlitz's Plover	105	White-backed Vulture	118
Tawny Eagle	104	Reed Cormorant	111
Fork-tailed Drongo	104	Greater Kestrel	104
Pirit Batis	102	Namaqua Sandgrouse	104

Of Namibia's 16 endemic and near endemic species seven have fewer than 20 records, 12 have fewer than 50 records and only two species have

over 100 records. Studies on the breeding biology of the poorly recorded endemic and near endemic species must be a priority.

Species	No. records of laying date	No. records of clutch size
Hartlaub's Spurfowl	39	23
Rüppell's Korhaan	88	84
Damara Tern	1 073	1 012
Rüppell's Parrot	10	4
Violet Woodhoopoe	11	9
Monteiro's Hornbill	148	92
Damara Hornbill	40	33
Dune Lark	44	29
Barlow's Lark	13	8
Benguela Long-billed Lark	5	4
Gray's Lark	47	28
Herero Chat	9	7
White-tailed Shrike	60	37
Bare-cheeked Babbler	14	11
Rockrunner	31	17
Carp's Tit	12	2

Fifty-five of Namibia's 71 Red Data bird species (Simmons *et al.* 2015) breed, potentially breed or have bred (in the case of the nationally extinct Egyptian Vulture) in Namibia. Of these, six species have no breeding information, 31 species, including the six with no breeding data, have fewer than 20 records (56% of the

confirmed and likely to breed species), 39 species (71%) have fewer than 50 records and only six species (11%) have over 100 records. The endemic and Red Data species with large amounts of breeding information have invariably been the subject of focused research and/or monitoring.

Red Data status	Species	No. Records of laying date	No. Records of clutch size
Nationally extinct	Egyptian Vulture	1	0
Critically Endangered	Eurasian Bittern	UB	UB
	Black-checked Lovebird	NC	NC
	Blue Crane	48	26
	Cape Gannet	52	639
	Cape Vulture	69	49
	Pel's Fishing Owl	1	0
	Tristan Albatross	NB	NB
Endangered	African Penguin	197	2 797
	African Finfoot	1	1
	African Marsh-Harrier	CB	CB
	Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross	NB	NB

	Bank Cormorant	79	95
	Bateleur	28	23
	Black-browed Albatross	NB	NB
	Black Harrier	NC	NC
	Black Stork	3	5
	Booted Eagle	3	0
	Cape Cormorant	116	1 019
	Cinderella Waxbill	CB	CB
	Great Crested Grebe	11	7
	Grey Crowned Crane	3	1
	Hooded Vulture	CB	CB
	Ludwig's Bustard	20	12
	Martial Eagle	42	28
	Rock Pratincole	16	15
	Rufous-bellied Heron	3	2
	Saddle-billed Stork	6	4
	Slaty Egret	12	22
	Southern Ground-Hornbill	1	0
	Tawny Eagle	104	69
	Violet Wood-hoopoe	11	9
	Wattled Crane	14	11
	White-backed Vulture	872	118
	Yellow-billed Oxpecker	3	0
Vulnerable	African Fish-Eagle	28	25
	African Skimmer	13	37
	Caspian Tern	14	15
	Greater Flamingo	8	27 000
	Great White Pelican	32	590
	Hartlaub's Gull	60	1 104
	Lappet-faced Vulture	1 274	1 069
	Lesser Flamingo	5	50 500
	Secretarybird	53	42
	Spectacled Petrel	NB	NB
	Wandering Albatross	NB	NB
	White-chinned Petrel	NB	NB
	White-headed Vulture	11	11
Near Threatened	African Black Oystercatcher	17	14
	Angola Cave-Chat	NC	NC
	Black-necked Grebe	50	429
	Black-winged Pratincole	NB	NB
	Cape Eagle-Owl	5	5
	White-capped Albatross	NB	NB
	Crowned Cormorant	76	72
	Damara Tern	1 073	1 012
	Eurasian Curlew	NB	NB
	European Roller	NB	NB
	Great Snipe	NB	NB
	Kori Bustard	33	26
	Lesser Kestrel	NB	NB
	Maccoa Duck	21	10
	Marabou Stork	8	29
	Northern Giant-Petrel	NB	NB
	Pallid Harrier	NB	NB
	Peregrine Falcon	7	6
Red-footed Falcon	NB	NB	
Rüppell's Parrot	10	4	
Slater's Lark	4	2	

	Sooty Shearwater	NB	NB
	Verreaux's Eagle	78	47
	Chestnut-banded Plover	94	81

Future priorities

From this analysis it is clear that, while the set of breeding data on Namibia's birds has increased steadily over the years, we are far short of the desired levels of information for most species. The breeding information needs, in order of priority, are:

1. Namibia's Red Data bird species (Table 9), particularly the species shaded in red and orange. Local students and researchers, visiting scientists and keen birders should direct their efforts towards these species;
2. Namibia's endemic bird species (Table 8), particularly the species shaded in red and orange. Again, these should be focal species for students, researchers and birders; and
3. Breeding information on other bird species with fewer than 20 breeding records, particularly species not yet recorded breeding in Namibia but likely to do so (Table 4) and species recorded breeding, but with no detailed information on laying dates and clutch sizes (Table 5). This provides an exciting challenge to local and visiting birders to find the nests of these species and record their breeding details.

Breeding information on any of the above priority species warrants at the very least a report in *Lanioturdus*.

The Namibia Nest Record Card project is currently being revitalised. The old paper and pen system is being replaced by a web-based data entry system on the Environmental

Information Service (EIS), rather like entering atlas data. The information added then goes directly into the data base and is also immediately available to everyone. A notification will go out as soon as the system is set up and running smoothly. In the meantime, please record all your breeding information in anticipation of the new revitalised Namibian Nest Record Card project.

References

- Brown, C.J. 1987. *Breeding data for the birds of South West Africa / Namibia*. Unpublished manuscript. Directorate of Nature Conservation, Windhoek: 40 pp.
- Brown, C. 2014. Breeding Data on the Birds of Namibia: Laying months, colony and clutch sizes and egg measurements. *Lanioturdus* **47(1)**: 15-19.
- Brown, C.J., P.A. Bridgeford, S.G. Braine, M. Paxton and W. Versfeld 2015. Breeding data on the birds of Namibia: laying months, colony and clutch sizes and egg measurements. *Ornithological Observations* **6**: 92-196.
- Clinning, C.F. 1979. *Breeding data for the birds of South West Africa*. Internal report to the Department of Agriculture and Nature Conservation. Windhoek.
- Simmons, R.E., C.J. Brown and J. Kemper 2015. *Birds to watch in Namibia, Red, Rare and Endemic Species*. Ministry of Environment & Tourism and Namibia Nature Foundation.