

LANIOTURDUS

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Editorial

This is now the eleventh edition of Lanioturdus that I have edited. Looking back to Lanioturdus 41 (1), the first I edited, I note that I wrote "I do not see myself as a longterm replacement in this position but rather as someone who will fill the gap until a permanent editor can be found. However, I have the feeling that this statement might well end up in the category of 'famous last words.'" How true that statement has turned out to be! However, I must hasten to add that I have thoroughly enjoyed editing the journal. My first attempt at editing was also our first electronic edition of Lanioturdus and looking through all the electronic issues to date I see that we have come a long way since the early attempts.

The last four issues have been set by Eckart Demasius and I believe that Eckart has done a fine job after initially finding himself up against a rather steep learning curve. Eckart also has a huge library of birding related digital photographs, some of which we have used to illustrate various articles and which have, in my opinion, really enhanced the publication.

I would really like to know what you, the readers, think of Lanioturdus. I have had the odd email commending the journal and initially there were one of two who said they preferred Lanioturdus in the booklet form to the electronic format. Printing and postage costs made the booklet form prohibitively expensive forcing us to change to the electronic format. In this regard we are way ahead of most of the South African bird clubs some of which are now starting to investigate

Trends in Namibian Waterbird Populations 4: Herons and Egrets Part 1

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This article continues the series on trends in Namibian waterbird populations and summarises count data for herons and egrets for the period 1977 to December 2008. For each species the Red Data Book (RDB) status, both global and Namibian, is given, the population trend as per Wetlands International, the number of times the species was counted, the number of times it has passed the 1% population criterion, the maximum count and the sites where it has passed the 1% population criterion.

The local trend is calculated for the period 1991 to 2008 only because continuous data is available for that time. The computer programme TRIM was used for these analyses (see an earlier publication for the selection criteria and methods). (*Lanioturdus 43(2) - Ed*).

For each species the number of sites used in the analysis, the number of observed counts (this includes zero counts), and the sites containing more than 10% of the total number counted are given. A trend and slope are given. A slope value of 1 would indicate a perfectly stable population, whereas any value above 1 means a positive trend and a value of less than 1 a negative trend. Population trends are graphically presented as indices relative to a base year (in this case 1991) and thus all have a value of 1 for 1991. An index value of 2 indicates a doubling of the population relative to 1991 and an index of 0.5 would mean half of the 1991 figure.

Trends for thirteen species of heron and egrets could be determined. Out of these, two are increasing, two are stable, one is decreasing and the remainder are uncertain. None of the species considered has ever passed the 1% population mark in any of the counts, in fact,

figures for all the species are well below the 1% figure.

(Larger scale replications of the graphs in this article are attached to the end of this edition).

4.1 Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)¹

IUCN RDB Status: Least concern
Namibia RDB Status: ?
WI Trend: Stable



Photo: Eckart Demasius

This is one of the most widespread herons in southern Africa and it has been counted at least once at every Namibian site for which there is data. Numbers counted are generally low, reflecting the birds' solitary nature with higher aggregations found at the larger sites.

No of times counted: 590
No of times past 1% population (=10 000): 0
Maximum count: 257 at Lake Oponono on 10 July 1995
Past 1% population at: Nowhere

Trend analysis

Number of sites:	20
Number of observed counts:	265
Number of missing counts:	95
Total number of counts:	360

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:

Site	Number	%
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¹ Names follow Hockey, P.A.R., Dean, W.R.J. and Ryan, P.G. (eds) 2005. *Roberts – Birds of Southern Africa, VIIIth Edition*. The Trustees of the John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, Cape Town, South Africa.

Lake Oponono	1468	28.4
Sandwich Harbour	1168	22.6
Walvis Bay	965	18.7

Overall slope: Stable
 0.9987 ± 0.0099

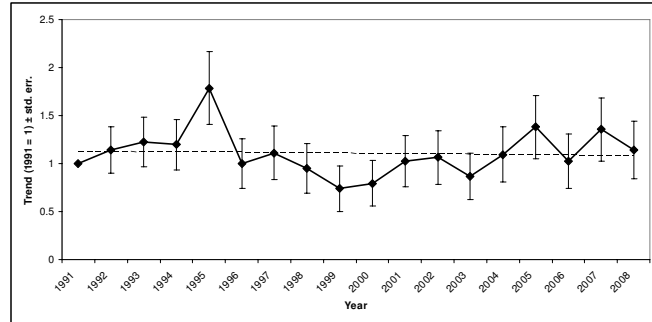


Figure 1: Trend of Grey Heron population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

4.2 Black-headed Heron (*Ardea melanocephala*)

IUCN RDB Status: Least concern
 Namibia RDB Status: ?
 WI Trend: Increasing



Photo: Eckart Demasius

This heron is less common in Namibia than the Grey Heron and this is reflected in the counts. It has been counted mainly at the large dams and perennial river sites. The peak in numbers in 2004 and 2005 is due to abnormally high numbers at Hardap Dam where it occurs in heronries on two islands.

No of times counted: 45
 No of times past 1% population (=3 000): 0
 Maximum count: 22 at Hardap Dam on 29 July 2004
 Past 1% population at: Nowhere
 Trend analysis

Number of sites:	7
Number of observed counts:	97
Number of missing counts:	29
Total number of counts:	126

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:

Site	Number	%
Hardap Dam	46	35.7
Lake Oponono	38	29.5
Mahango Game Reserve	15	11.6

Overall slope: Uncertain
 1.0795 ± 0.1197

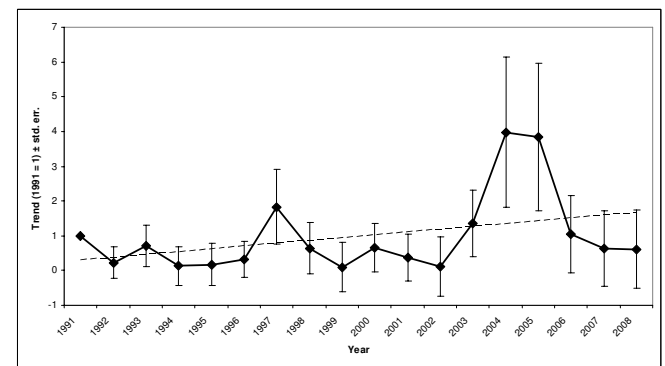


Figure 2: Trend of Black-headed Heron population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

4.3 Goliath Heron (*Ardea goliath*)

IUCN RDB Status: Least concern
 Namibia RDB Status: ?
 WI Trend: Stable



Photo: Eckart Demasius

This species is fairly rare in Namibia, perhaps because of its preference for shallow waters, such as margins of rivers and dams. It is however, consistently counted at the sites where it does occur.

No of times counted: 60
 No of times past 1% population (=1 000): 0
 Maximum count: 19 at Mahango Game Reserve on 24 July 2006
 Past 1% population at: Nowhere

Trend analysis

Number of sites: 4
 Number of observed counts: 57
 Number of missing counts: 15
 Total number of counts: 72

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:

Site	Number	%
Hardap Dam	27	13.8
Mahango Game Reserve	139	70.9

Overall slope: Uncertain
 1.0395 ±0.0379

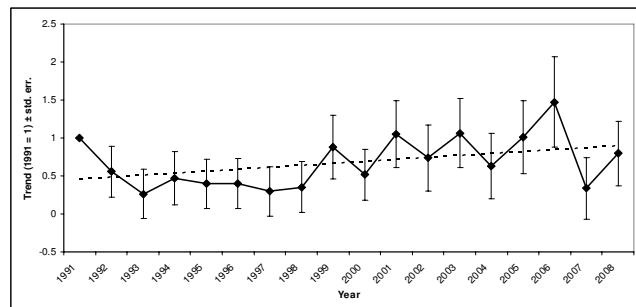


Figure 3: Trend of Goliath Heron population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

4.4 Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*)

IUCN RDB Status: Least concern
 Namibia RDB Status: ?
 WI Trend: Decreasing

This species prefers dense emergent vegetation such as reedbeds and its secretive nature results in it often being overlooked at counts. Internationally this species is affected by habitat loss and although the model gives the slope as uncertain, it does appear to be on the decline in Namibia as well.

No of times counted: 68
 No of times past 1% population (=2 200): 0
 Maximum count: 19 at Olushandja Dam on 14 April 1997
 Past 1% population at: Nowhere

Trend analysis

Number of sites: 4
 Number of observed counts: 45
 Number of missing counts: 27
 Total number of counts: 72

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:

Site	Number	%
Mahango Game Reserve	43	24.0
Olushandja Dam	69	38.5
Shamvura	58	32.4

Overall slope: Uncertain
 0.9538 ±0.0406

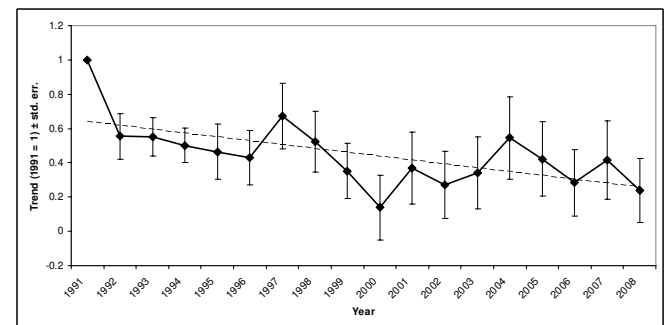


Figure 4: Trend of Purple Heron population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

4.5 Great Egret (*Egretta alba*)

IUCN RDB Status: Least concern
 Namibia RDB Status: ?
 WI Trend: Stable



Photo: Eckart Demasius

This is the largest of the white egrets and is counted regularly at the sites in northern and north-eastern Namibia but it has also been

recorded elsewhere. Counts of this species show a steady increase at Lake Oponono and in the Mahango Game Reserve, the reasons for this are unclear.

No of times counted: 113
 No of times past 1% population (=3 000): 0
 Maximum count: 95 at Lake Oponono on 23 July 2008
 Past 1% population at: Nowhere

Trend analysis

Number of sites: 9
 Number of observed counts: 117
 Number of missing counts: 45
 Total number of counts: 162

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:

Site	Number	%
Lake Oponono	248	22.9
Mahango Game Reserve	434	40.1
Shamvura	144	13.3
Swakoppoort Dam	136	12.6

Overall slope: Moderate increase (p<0.01)
 1.1105 ±0.0327

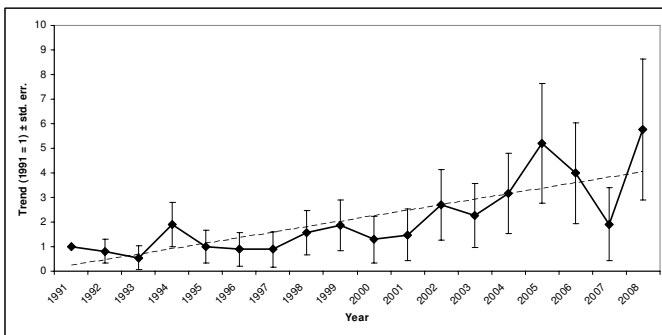


Figure 5: Trend of Great Egret population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

4.6 Yellow-billed Egret (*Egretta intermedia*)

IUCN RDB Status: Least concern
 Namibia RDB Status: ?
 WI Trend: Stable

This is also a less common heron in Namibia because of its preference for seasonally flooded grasslands and marshes. It is mainly counted at the north-eastern sites but has

also been recorded at Sandwich Harbour and Naute Dam.

No of times counted: 46
 No of times past 1% population (=1 000): 0
 Maximum count: 52 at Lake Oponono on 30 April 2001
 Past 1% population at: Nowhere

Trend analysis

Number of sites: 5
 Number of observed counts: 65
 Number of missing counts: 25
 Total number of counts: 90

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:

Site	Number	%
Lake Oponono	98	34.5
Mahango Game reserve	98	34.5
Tsumkwe Pans	46	16.2

Overall slope: Uncertain
 1.1666 ±0.2239

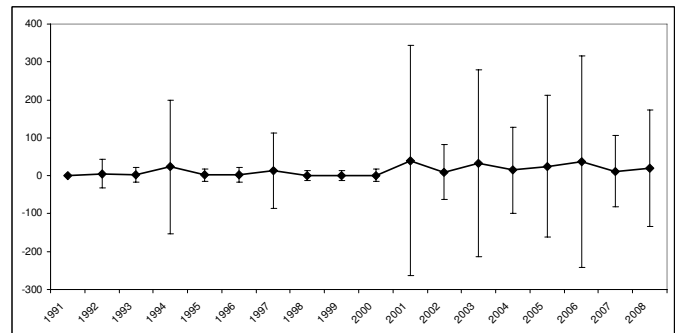


Figure 6: Trend of Yellow-billed Egret population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

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 Simmons, R.E. and Brown, C.J. In press. *Birds to watch in Namibia: red, rare and endemic species*. Ministry of Environment and Tourism and Namibia Nature Foundation, Windhoek.

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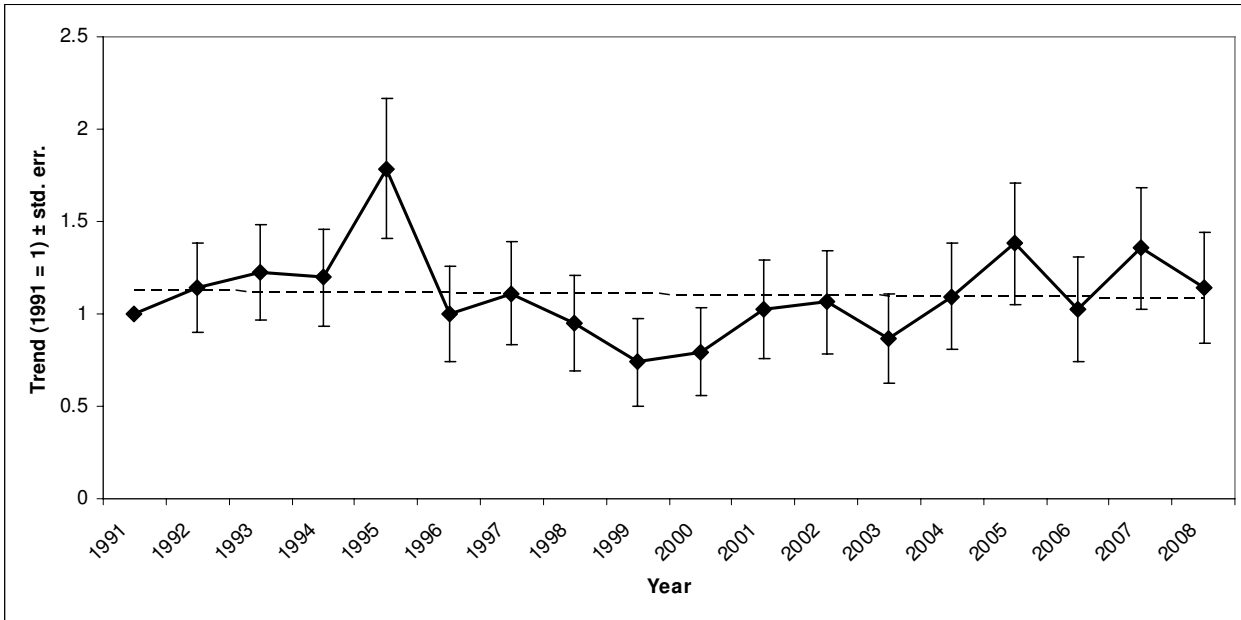


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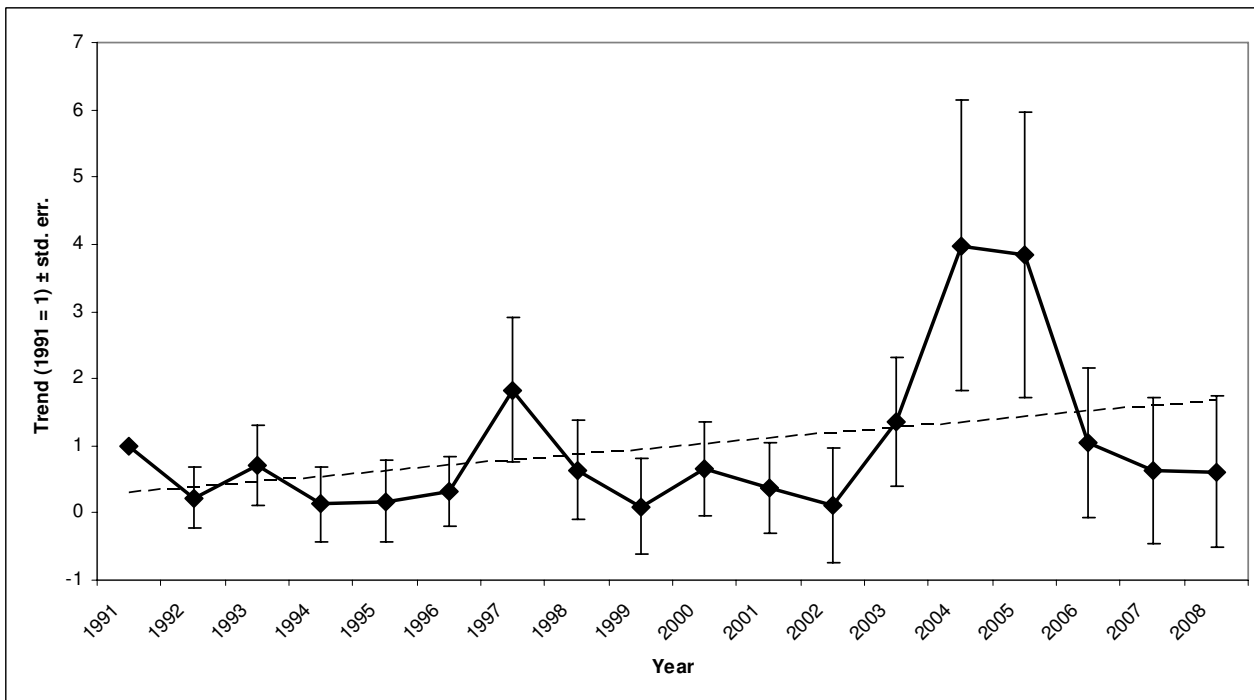


Figure 2: Trend of Black-headed Heron population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

4.3 Goliath Heron (*Ardea goliath*)

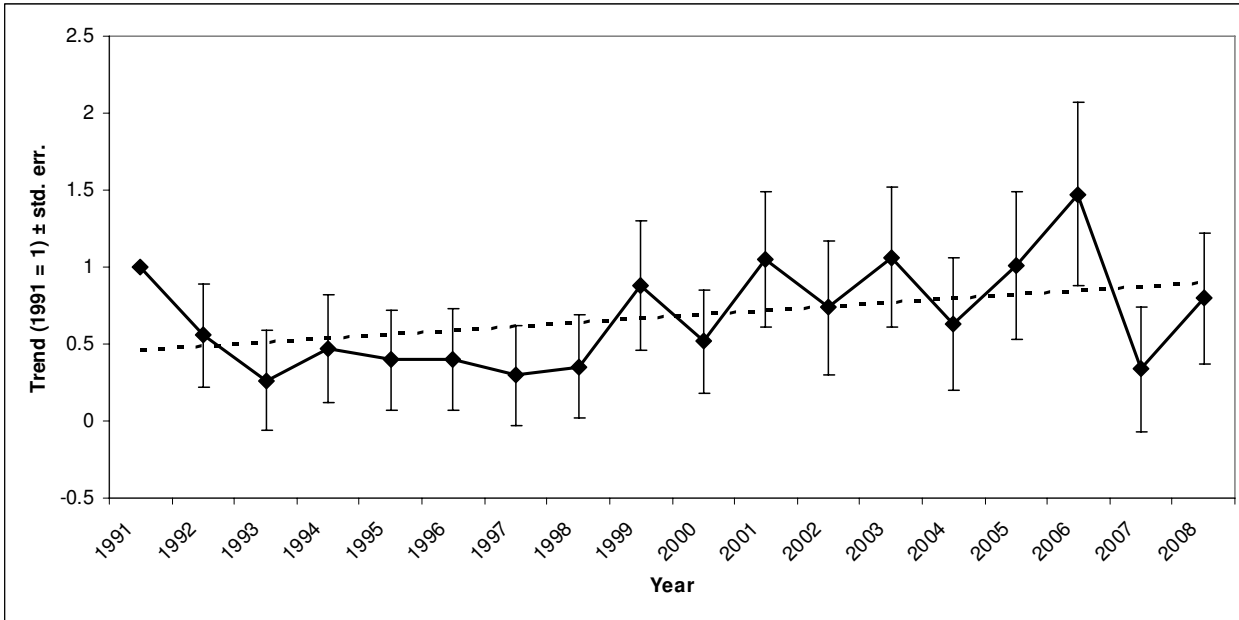


Figure 3: Trend of Goliath Heron population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

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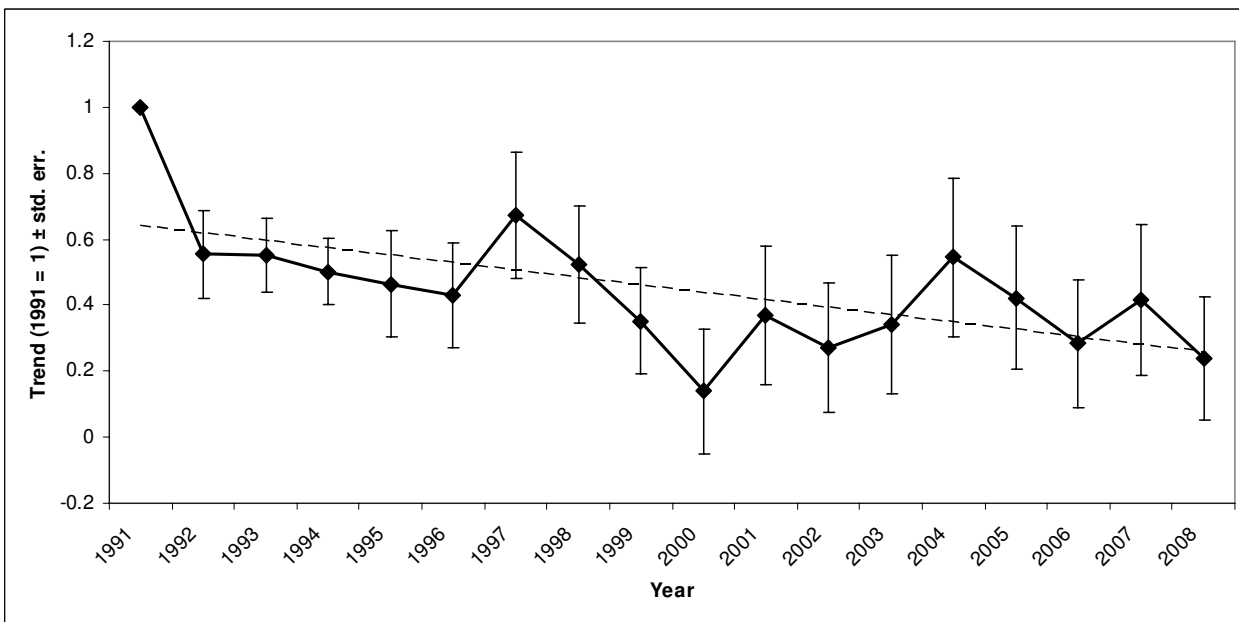


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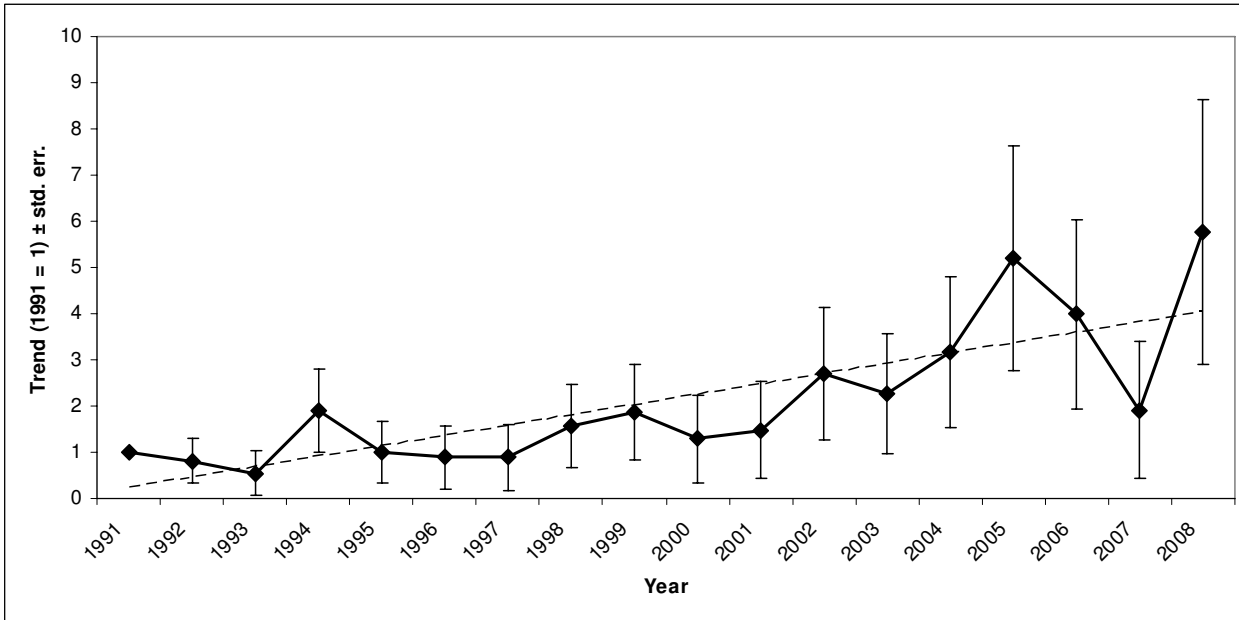


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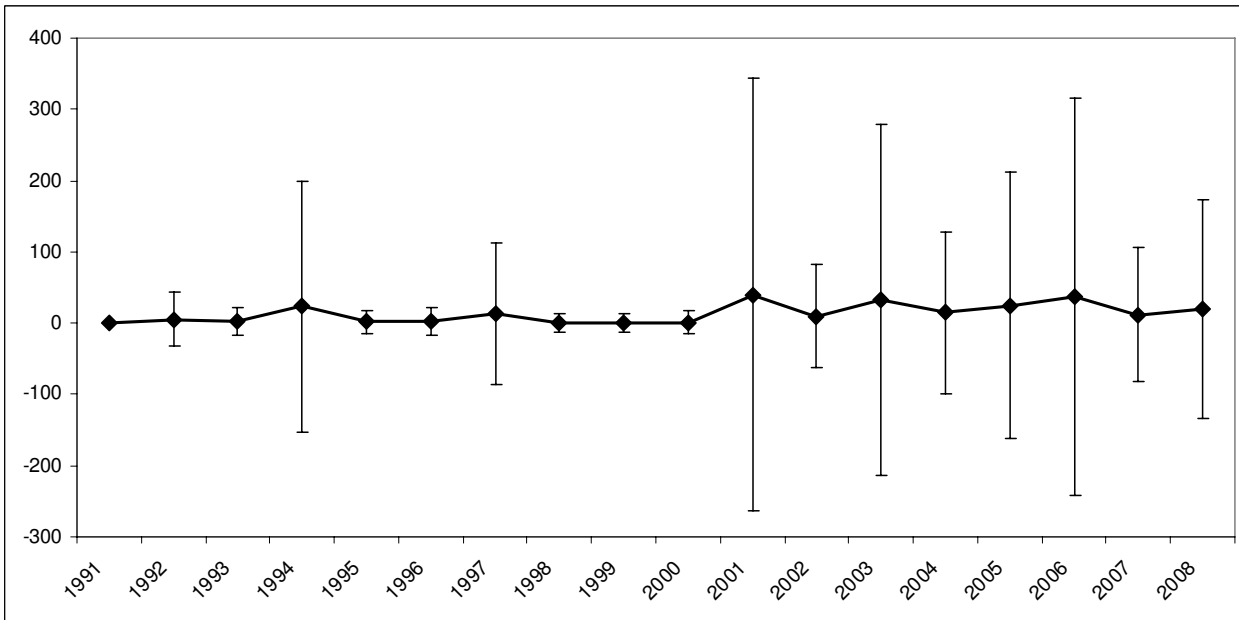


Figure 6: Trend of Yellow-billed Egret population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.