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Editorial

A report was posted on SA Birdnet in July 2013 by a renowned birder claiming to have seen two species in north western Namibia new to Namibia (there was a hint of a third) and indeed new to the southern African subregion. This person also claimed to have visited the site where Angola Cave Chat is known to occur and to have made an overnight foray into Angola to see Swierstra's Spurfowl.

These last claims set alarm bells ringing as some who had seen the Angola Cave Chat were adamant that the vehicle purportedly used could not possibly have accessed the terrain and also that it is not possible to reach the area where Swierstra's Spurfowl occurs in Angola on a single overnight trip unless there is another population of these birds a lot further to the south. This makes the

If anyone has witnessed anything like this before we would be very pleased to hear from them especially if they know anything about the possible causes of this.

Trends in Namibian Waterbird Populations 10: Gulls and Terns

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The following is a summary of waterbird count data for selected species in Namibia, covering 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 using the computer programme TRIM (see an earlier publication for the selection criteria and methods) *(Lanioturdus 43 (2) – Ed.)*. 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. Thus 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. 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.

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

10.1 Kelp Gull *(Larus dominicanus)*[1]

© Eckart Demasius

IUCN RDB Status: Least concern
Namibia RDB Status: ?
WI Trend: Increasing
This is one of the most common gulls along the Namibian coast and has no doubt benefited from the increase in human habitation along the coast providing readily available food (at e.g. rubbish dumps) and breeding areas.

No of times counted: 426
No of times past 1% population (=700): 73
Maximum count: 11791 at Walvis Bay on 30 July 2006
Past 1% population at: Lüderitz Peninsula (5), Mile 4 Salt Works (2), Sandwich Harbour (28), Swakop Sewage Works (1), Walvis Bay (37)

Trend analysis

Number of sites:	10
Number of observed counts:	135
Number of missing counts:	45
Total number of counts:	180

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:

Site	Number	%
Sandwich Harbour	42699	35.2
Walvis Bay	58474	48.2

Overall slope: Moderate increase ($p<0.01$)
1.0723 ±0.0224

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

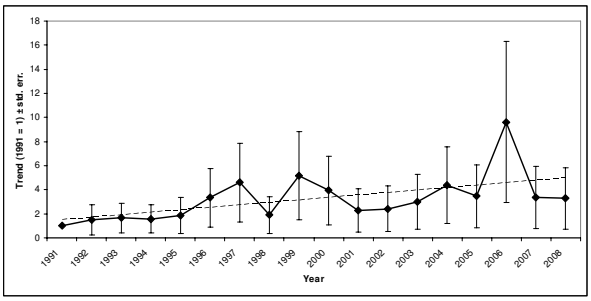

Figure 1: Trend of Kelp Gull population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

10.2 Grey-headed Gull *(Larus cirrocephalus)*

© Eckart Demasius

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

This gull is often overseen due to its close resemblance to Hartlaub's Gull and thus is probably missing from several counts.

No of times counted: 289
No of times past 1% population (=3000): 0

Maximum count: 219 at Kunene River Mouth on 22 November 1994
Past 1% population at: Nowhere

Trend analysis

Number of sites: 13

Number of observed counts: 184
Number of missing counts: 50
Total number of counts: 234

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:

Site	Number	%
Kunene River Mouth	237	10.7
Lake Oponono	700	31.6
Walvis Bay	239	10.8
Walvis Bay Sewage	438	19.8

Overall slope: Uncertain
0.9468 ±0.0345

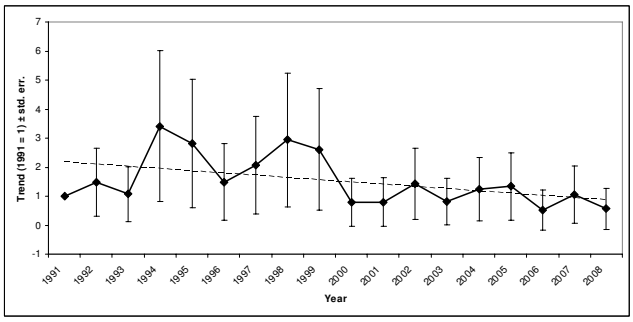

Figure 2: Trend of Grey-headed Gull population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

10.3 Hartlaub's Gull *(Larus hartlaubii)*

© Eckart Demasius

IUCN RDB Status: Least concern
Namibia RDB Status: Vulnerable
WI Trend: Increasing
This is another gull that has benefited from the expansion of human settlements at the coast.

No of times counted: 444

No of times past 1% population (=300): 162

Maximum count: 3650 at Swakop Sewage Works on 24 February 2008
Past 1% population at: Lüderitz Peninsula (15), Mile 4 Salt Works (3), Sandwich Harbour (8), Swakop River Mouth (5), Swakop Sewage Works (72), Walvis Bay (23), Walvis Bay Sewage Works (36)

Trend analysis

Number of sites:	8
Number of observed counts:	112
Number of missing counts:	32
Total number of counts:	144

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:

Site	Number	%
Lüderitz Peninsula	7158	12.1
Swakop Sewage	17810	30.0
Walvis Bay	15424	26.0
Walvis Bay Sewage	7968	13.4

Overall slope: Moderate increase ($p<0.01$)
1.0506 ±0.0183

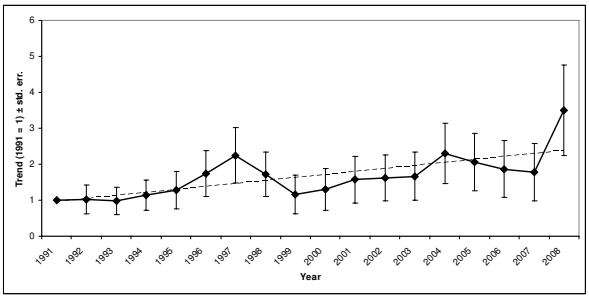

Figure 3: Trend of Hartlaub's Gull population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

10.4 Whiskered Tern *(Chlidonias hybrida)*

© Neil Thomson

IUCN RDB Status: Least concern
Namibia RDB Status: ?
WI Trend: Unknown
This fresh-water tern is regularly observed in small numbers on the inland wetlands.

No of times counted: 71
No of times past 1% population (=100): 7
Maximum count: 303 at Tsumkwe Pans on 30 January 1997
Past 1% population at: Lake Oponono (1), Tsumkwe Pans (6)

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	188	10.6
Lake Oponono	291	16.4
Tsumkwe Pans	1061	59.7

Overall slope: Uncertain
0.9686 ±0.0553

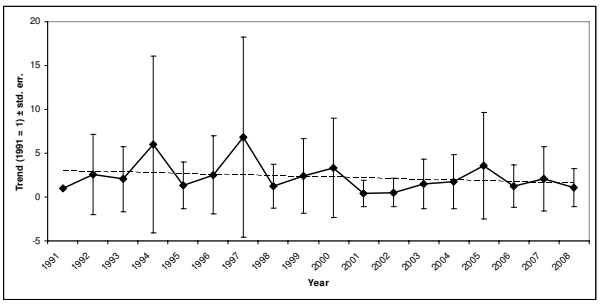

Figure 4: Trend of Whiskered Tern population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

10.5 White-winged Tern *(Chlidonias leucopterus)*

© Eckart Demasius

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

This tern is also seen in small numbers at most wetlands.

No of times counted: 120
No of times past 1% population (=20000): 0
Maximum count: 504 at Walvis Bay on 3 March 1999
Past 1% population at: nowhere

Trend analysis

Number of sites:	13
Number of observed counts:	176
Number of missing counts:	58
Total number of counts:	234

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:

Site	Number	%
Lake Oponono	667	16.3
Swakoppoort Dam	476	11.6
Walvis Bay	2297	56.0

Overall slope: Uncertain
0.9331 ±0.0657

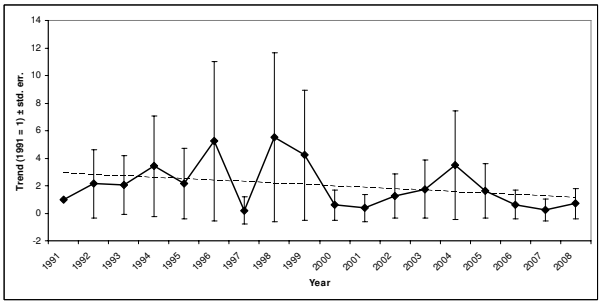

Figure 5: Trend of White-winged Tern population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

10.6 Caspian Tern *(Sterna caspia)*

© Eckart Demasius

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

This large tern is seen mainly at the coast but also regularly at Hardap Dam.

No of times counted: 189
No of times past 1% population (=20): 75
Maximum count: 229 at Walvis Bay on 29 April 1995
Past 1% population at: Hardap Dam (2), Kunene River Mouth (1), Sandwich Harbour (38), Walvis Bay (34)

Trend analysis

Number of sites:	9
Number of observed counts:	118
Number of missing counts:	44
Total number of counts:	162

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:

Site	Number	%
Sandwich Harbour	1221	42.4
Walvis Bay	1352	46.9

Overall slope: Stable
0.9916 ±0.0188

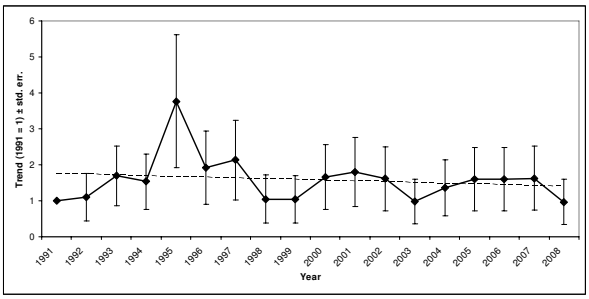

Figure 6: Trend of Caspian Tern population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

10.7 Common Tern *(Sterna hirundo)*

© Eckart Demasius

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

Common Terns make up the bulk of the numbers of terns counted at the coast.

No of times counted: 154

No of times past 1% population (=11000): 29
Maximum count: 182700 at Sandwich Harbour on 18 January 2001
Past 1% population at: Cape Cross (1), Mile 4 Salt Works (1), Sandwich Harbour (18), Walvis Bay (9)

Trend analysis

Number of sites:	7
Number of observed counts:	95
Number of missing counts:	31
Total number of counts:	126

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:

Site	Number	%
Sandwich Harbour	956247	77.2
Walvis Bay	199359	16.1

Overall slope: Uncertain
1.0827 ±0.0552

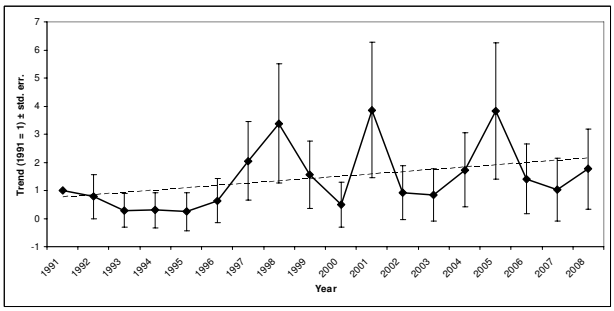

Figure 78: Trend of Common Tern population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

10.8 Damara Tern *(Sterna balaenarum)*

© Eckart Demasius

IUCN RDB Status: Near Threatened
Namibia RDB Status: Near Threatened
WI Trend: Stable

This Namibian endemic has a small population spread along the coast and is generally only seen in small flocks.

No of times counted: 145
No of times past 1% population (=140): 13

Maximum count: 920 at Walvis Bay on 29 January 2006

Past 1% population at: Sandwich Harbour (4), Walvis Bay (9)

Trend analysis

Number of sites:	7
Number of observed counts:	94
Number of missing counts:	32
Total number of counts:	126

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:

Site	Number	%
Sandwich Harbour	1935	30.4
Walvis Bay	3805	59.7

Overall slope: Uncertain
1.0232 ±0.0323

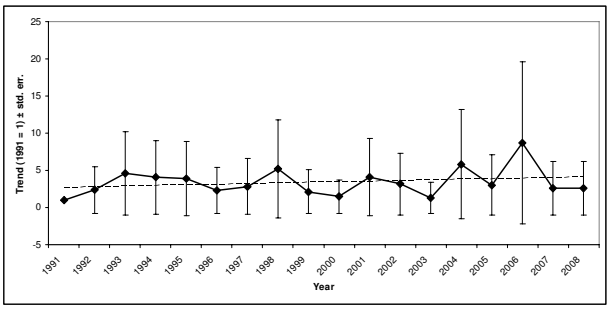

Figure 8: Trend of Damara Tern population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

10.9 Swift Tern *(Sterna bergii)*

© Eckart Demasius

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

This tern breeds on the Namibian coast and can be readily observed.

No of times counted: 167
No of times past 1% population (=200): 45
Maximum count: 1659 at Walvis Bay on 29 April 1995
Past 1% population at: Cape Cross (2), Lüderitz Peninsula (5), Sandwich Harbour (16), Walvis Bay (22)

Trend analysis

Number of sites:	7
Number of observed counts:	94
Number of missing counts:	32
Total number of counts:	126

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:

Site	Number	%
Lüderitz Peninsula	2761	13.2
Sandwich Harbour	7127	34.0
Walvis Bay	8583	41.0

Overall slope: Uncertain
1.0765 ±0.0520

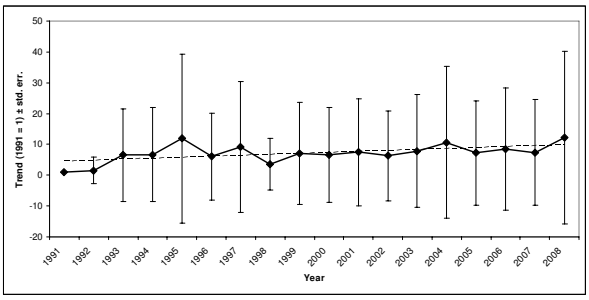

Figure 9: Trend of Swift Tern population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

10.10 Sandwich Tern *(Sterna sandvicensis)*

© Eckart Demasius

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

This migratory tern is common at the coast but not in the same numbers as the Common Tern.

No of times counted: 138
No of times past 1% population (=1700): 4
Maximum count: 5400 at Sandwich Harbour on 2 February 2005
Past 1% population at: Sandwich Harbour (3), Walvis Bay (1)

Trend analysis

Number of sites:	6
Number of observed counts:	85
Number of missing counts:	23
Total number of counts:	108

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:

Site	Number	%
Sandwich Harbour	15973	59.4
Walvis Bay	6478	24.1

Overall slope: Uncertain
1.0825 ±0.0840

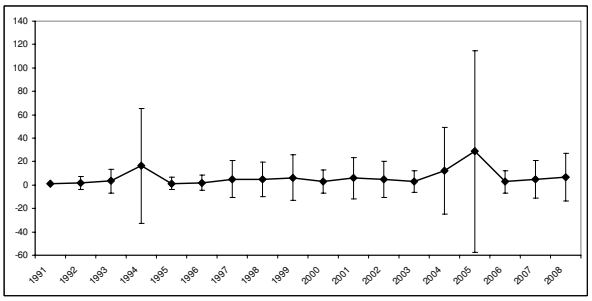

Figure 10: Trend of Sandwich Tern population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

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IUCN 2009. IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Version 2009.1 www.iucnredlist.org Wetlands International. 2006. *Waterbird Population Estimates – Fourth Edition.* S. Delany and D. Scott (Eds.), Wetlands International, Wageningen, The Netherlands

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.

African Harrier-Hawks in Windhoek

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In an article by Chris Brown entitled *African Harrier-Hawk hunting in Palm Tree in Windhoek* published in Lanioturdus 44(4), the author, after observing a sub-adult bird in Windhoek West on 31/03/2011, opened with the following statement:-