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Editorial

I am writing this while sitting on my stoep and watching 6 of the 10 endemic Namibian birds flying past or hunting for food amongst the mushara bushes, some of which still have green leaves left. The dry season in Namibia is so pronounced that it is surprising that more of the local birds do not leave for the greener places in Africa. I recently headed east to watch the solar eclipse and kept going east until I hit the Malawi-Mozambique border. If you want to know where all the Paradise Flycatchers migrate to, just visit the rift valley on the shores of Lake Malawi and they will be one of the commoner birds. There is a cold dry season in Malawi but it can rain any month of the year so the bush retains much of its greenery. Surrounded by highlands on most sides, the lake has numerous rivers into it which also provide for evergreen vegetation.

Malawi is a rather small country so it has no endemic species but does have several endemic races which occur on isolated mountains. I was interested in seeing the Brown-breasted Barbet but the dry season was not the time to look for this bird in Liwonde National Park. One fortunate thing Namibia has in its favour is its small human population and thus slow rate of deforestation. I tried to look for the White-winged Apalis in Thyolo forest reserve but failed to find the bird. I doubt that the bird will be there when I next return as the forest was just a remnant and was in the process of being totally cleared during my visit. However, other areas like Mount Mulanje were excellent and birding there was very good. I had forgotten how difficult birding is in montane forest compared to our open dry scrub vegetation. If you cannot recognize bird calls then you will see very few species. The forest is full of skulkers who call from a few meters away, flit around in the dense undergrowth and defy all attempts to bring them out for a view. Just as your patience is wearing thin, they fly across the trail and disappear forever.

The solar eclipse was worth the 2000 km drive and since there will be another one in Namibia on 4 December 2002 I strongly encourage everyone to try and see it. Kate Sharpe and I are willing to lead a bird club outing to Katima Mulilo next year for a combined bird watching and solar eclipse event. That part of the Caprivi is safe to visit and offers many species not seen in the rest of the country. Stay tuned to the Bird Call for specifics on the trip.

WETLAND BIRDS OF TSUTSAB VLEI AND SURROUNDING WATERBODIES

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Preface:

This article has been inspired by the book "A preliminary check list of the birds of South West Africa" (Winterbottom 1971). I was reading the book when I noticed a reference to the birds of Groot Huis Vlei (Von Maltzahn 1963). Groot Huis is a farm, now named Neitsas 264, to the northeast of Grootfontein, QDS 1918BC. The Groot Huis Vlei forms part of the Omuramba Owambo drainage system which is the source of Tsutsab Vlei.

Introduction:

This is a report of the occurrence of wetland and water related birds on an ephemeral pan, situated on the farm Tsutsab, in the north-eastern Tsumeb district just east of where the Tsumeb-Grootfontein district boundary connects to the southern boundary of the Kavango region. By road the town of Tsumeb lies approximately 85 km to the southwest and the town of Grootfontein approximately 80 km to the south. The quarter degree square covered is 1818CC. The average altitude is 1100m a.s.l. The checklist has been compiled by us since 1992.

Area and habitat description:

The topography of the area is very flat with no hills or mountains. The habitat consists of mixed Acacia and broadleaf woodland. The main species occurring are: Tambotie *Spirostachys africana*, Marula *Sclerocarya birrea*, Silver terminalia *Terminalia sericea*, Leadwood *Combretum imberbe*, Red bushwillow *Combretum apiculatum*, Real fan palm *Hyphaene benguellensis*, Bird plum *Berchemia discolor*, Sickle bush *Dichrostachys cinerea*, Black thorn *Acacia mellifera*, Sweet scented thorn *Acacia nilotica*, False umbrella thorn *Acacia reficiens*, Bastard umbrella thorn *Acacia luederitzii*, and Buffalo-thorn *Ziziphus mucronata*.

The soil is very variable. There is virtually no suitable cultivable soil. There is shallow soil all around, mostly loam and clay. Much of the area also has very shallow sandy soil within hard calcrete banks. A few rocky outcrops rise about 1 - 2 m from the surrounding area. Within the area are several deep pans, surrounded by dense vegetation. There are also more open areas called park veld. This consists of a weaker type of sandy soil, not well drained, with pockets of Real fan palm and a few isolated, deep pans within a thick stand of Tambotie and Bird plum together with a dense undergrowth.

To the north of the area, still within this square, the habitat changes into broadleaf Kalahari woodland. This area is also flat but well drained. There are occasional deep pans. The reason for the change of habitat is the Omuramba Owambo.

Omuramba Owambo:

The catchment area for the Omuramba Owambo is very large including the area north of Grootfontein and west of the road to Rundu. The Omuramba drains towards the west, entering the Etosha Pan at Fischer's Pan. On its way to Etosha the Omuramba is fed by smaller tributaries. The river, however, rarely carries water right from its source into Etosha. Some of the water does reach the Etosha Pan via an underground aquifer, appearing on the surface again at waterholes like Twee Palms.

Because the area around Tsutsab is so flat, there are very few defined riverbeds and the runoff is very slow. The whole area is a drainage in itself. The water accumulates into more or less recognizable rivulets. During the rains huge areas are covered with water. Eventually these waters accumulate into a bigger, deeper river. This river has lush, dense vegetation, mainly Tambotie, Leadwood, Bluebush *Diospyros lycioides*, Common guarri *Euclea undulata*, Buffalothorn, Common wild fig *Ficus natalensis*, and Real fan palm. The river eventually becomes the main tributary to the Omuramba Owambo.

Other smaller waterways find their way into smaller vleis or pans. These pans are either just another stage on a tributary or are closed systems in themselves. Both types of pans occur on the farm and some are adjacent to each other.

Rainfall:

Rainfall has been measured on the farm since 1952. The 49 year average is 521,6 mm, however, there is a large variation in the annual total. The range has been a minimum of 189,5 mm to a maximum of 1001 mm. Occasionally low rainfall years proceed heavy rain years as in the 1972/73 season when we had only 321 mm, which was followed the next year by our maximum during the 1973/74 season.

Distribution of the rain fall plays a vital roll, as can be seen from Table 1. Even average or above average rainfall, will not fill the pan. Some years the pan fills with just a few good showers in a short period, even in low rainfall years. Persistent big showers will keep it filled and the surrounding areas flooded. During 49 years the pan has been filled just 27 times.

Table 1. Rainfall in mm for Farm Tsutsab and date Tsutsab Vlei flooded.

Year	Rainfall	Date pan flooded	Year	Rainfall	Date pan flooded
1952/53	388.5	no record	1976/77	655.0	6 Dec 1976
1953/54	786.5	no record	1977/78	770.0	23 Jan 1978
1954/55	497.5	no record	1978/79	454.5	18 Feb 1979
1955/56	705.5	no record	1979/80	489.0	not filled
1956/57	439.5	12 Mar 1957	1980/81	434.0	not filled
1957/58	357.5	not filled	1981/82	419.5	not filled
1958/59	366.5	not filled	1982/83	335.5	23 Jan 1983
1959/60	540.5	9 Mar 1960	1983/84	672.0	5 Dec 1983
1960/61	495.0	not filled	1984/85	627.5	2 Feb 1985
1961/62	411.0	not filled	1985/86	512.0	Mar 1986
1962/63	552.0	10 Jan 1963	1986/87	477.5	not filled
1963/64	362.5	not filled	1987/88	339.5	not filled
1964/65	450.0	not filled	1988/89	926.0	21 Dec 1988
1965/66	475.5	not filled	1989/90	415.0	8 Jan 1990
1966/67	409.0	5 Mar 1967	1990/91	469.0	12 Feb 1991
1967/68	934.5	23 Nov 1967	1991/92	400.0	not filled
1968/69	552.5	1 Mar 1969	1992/93	444.0	28 Feb 1993
1969/70	368.5	3 Feb 1970	1993/94	542.5	18 Jan 1994
1970/71	835.0	23 Dec 1970	1994/95	189.5	not filled

1971/72	465.0	28 Mar 1972	1995/96	381.5	17 Jan 1996
1972/73	321.0	not filled	1996/97	600.0	13 Jan 1997
1973/74	1001.0	23 Jan 1974	1997/98	391.0	not filled
1974/75	581.0	30 Apr 1975	1998/99	551.5	not filled
1975/76	652.0	23 Jan 1976	1999/00	733.5	25 Dec 1999
			2000/01	427.5	1 Mar 2001*

* filled again on 6 April 2001

The pan can be flooded for only a few weeks or as long as 9 months depending on the duration of the rainy season. In the most years, however, the pan dries up during the end of May or beginning of June. During 2000 water was recorded in the first week of August. The pan has no perennial water inlet but my grandfather dug a well in the middle of the pan to water cattle. Sweet water barbel *Clarias* sp. which occur in the Omuramba Owambo spread into the seasonal pans to breed when they fill with water. During the dry season they take refuge in the well, which has hundreds of the fish, as well as into other wells in the catchment area. The barbel leave the well and breed up to three times in a season. When the pan is drying up the barbel are a big attraction for all kinds of waterbirds.

Tsutsab Vlei/Tsutsab Pan:

When dry the vlei covers an area of about 70 hectares. When filled with water we call it a pan and then it is without vegetation. The pan has an irregular shape with a few bays and sandy or stony shores with no outlet. The shore slopes upwards towards the surrounding vegetation which is 2 meters from the waters edge. The vegetation around the banks is dense. Lower shrubs consist of Buffalo-thorn, Small leafed bride's bush *Flueggea virosa*, Rough-leafed croton *Croton meynhartii*, Confetti tree *Maytenus senegalensis* and a few *Grewia* species. The upper canopy consists of the following: Corkbush *Mundulea sericea*, leadwood, tambotie, Bird plum, Purple pod terminalia *Terminalia prunioides*, Transvaal saffronwood *Cassine transvaalensis* and Common and Blue-leafed commiphora *Commiphora glandulosa* & *C. glaucescens*, Sweet scented thorn, Black and Bastard umbrella thorn Acacia, Sickle bush, Apple leaf *Lonchocarpus nelsii*, Worm-cure albizia *Albizia anthelminthica*. Where the shore is shallow and has not been flooded for a long time there is also Trumpet flower *Ipomoea adenioides*. The combination of these different vegetation types creates an ideal habitat for all kinds of wetland birds.

Tsutsab Pan fills with flood water from the farms south of Tsutsab. When the rains are insufficient to create widespread flooding, the pan keeps all the water.

The normal water depth in Tsutsab Pan is 1,5 m but when filled to maximum flood capacity, the water may reach 2 m depth. Sometimes the water barely floods the pan and it only has water for a few days. During exceptionally heavy rains the pan can overflow into the surrounding land.

In 2001, the pan received water during a below average rainfall in February 2001. The water lasted about two weeks and we recorded very few wetland birds. After a single shower of 80mm of rain on 6 April 2001, the pan filled with water. Only a few wetland birds were sighted.

The question arises how water birds find our pan when it fills with water. Simmons *et al.* (1999) asked the same question in Bushmanland and concluded that the remarkable ability of wetland birds to find and exploit ephemeral pans in arid landscapes is due in part to their behaviour of directly following massive thunder heads and arriving as temporary pans are filling beneath them. The adaptive advantage of arriving shortly after flooding is presumably related to the emergence of massive numbers of frogs, termites and dragonflies that have lain dormant in and around such temporary pans. This temporary abundance of resources provides food to wetland birds.

In addition to their observations we suggest that at least some of these birds, especially the breeding visitors, remember Tsutsab Pan and come back to it time and again. The reason for this suggestion is since 1993 we have regularly recorded two Pygmy Geese on the pan. During the 1988/89 season we captively raised three Knob-billed Duck chicks at our home. Since then each year the male has come back during December, probably looking for food and water. He feeds in the fowl run. Sometimes he is accompanied by a younger male. In December 1999 when he should have been due, we recorded 240mm of rains for the month. The pans had water early in the season and he did not return. We have not seen him since.

White Pelican: They are only occasional visitors later in the season. In 2000 we recorded only one on the pan after it had been dry for two consecutive years. There was an abundance of barbel to feed on but no other pelicans. This year, 2001, we recorded 43 White Pelican during June.

Sometime during the middle to late 1970's I shot a ringed Redbilled Teal. I reported the ring to the National Museum, Livingstone, Zambia and they said it had been ringed as an adult at Lochinvar National Park, Kafue Flats, Zambia. It had traveled a minimum distance of 1023 km.

Table 2. List of birds found on Tsutsab Pan, Namibia with Robert's numbers:

007	Blacknecked Grebe	Podiceps nigricollis	breeding
008	Dabchick	Tachybaptus ruficollis	breeding
045	Eastern White Pelican	Pelecanus onocrotalus	visitor
060	African Darter	Anhinga melanogaster	rare visitor
062	Grey Heron	Ardea cinerea	visitor
066	Great White Egret	Egretta alba	visitor
067	Little Egret	E. garzetta	visitor
068	Yellowbilled Egret	E. intermedia	visitor
070	Slaty Egret	E. vinaceigula	rare visitor
071	Cattle Egret	Bubulcus ibis	visitor
072	Squacco Heron	Ardeola ralloides	rare visitor
074	Greenbacked Heron	Butorides striatus	visitor breeding?
076	Blackcrowned Night Heron	Nycticorax nycticorax	visitor
078	Little Bittern	Ixobrychus minutus	visitor
079	Dwarf Bittern	I. sturmii	breeding
080	Bittern	Botaurus stellaris	visitor
081	Hamerkop	Scopus umbretta	visitor
086	Woollynecked Stork	Ciconia episcopus	visitor
087	Openbilled Stork	Anastomus lamelligerus	visitor
088	Saddlebilled Stork	Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis	rare visitor
089	Marabou Stork	Leptoptilos crumeniferus	visitor
090	Yellowbilled Stork	Mycteria ibis	rare visitor
093	Glossy Ibis	Plegadis falcinellus	visitor
095	African Spoonbill	Platalea alba	visitor
100	Fulvous Duck	Dendrocygna bicolor	rare visitor
102	Egyptian Goose	Alopochen aegyptiacus	visitor

107	Hottentot Teal	<i>Anas hottentota</i>	rare visitor
108	Redbilled Teal	<i>A. erythrorhyncha</i>	breeding
113	Southern Pochard	<i>Netta erythrophthalma</i>	rare visitor
114	Pygmy Goose	<i>Nettapus auritus</i>	visitor
115	Knobilled Duck	<i>Sarkidiornis melanotos</i>	breeding
116	Spurwinged Goose	<i>Plectropterus gambensis</i>	rare visitor
117	Maccoa Duck	<i>Oxyura maccoa</i>	rare visitor
148	African Fish Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>	rare visitor
210	African Rail	<i>Rallus caerulescens</i>	rare visitor
214	Spotted Crake	<i>Porzana porzana</i>	rare visitor
216	Striped Crake	<i>Aenigmatolimnas marginalis</i>	rare visitor
226	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	visitor breeding?
227	Lesser Moorhen	<i>G. angulata</i>	breeding
228	Redknobbed Coot	<i>Fulica cristata</i>	visitor breeding?
240	African Jacana	<i>Actophilornis africanus</i>	rare visitor
242	Old World Painted Snipe	<i>Rostratula benghalensis</i>	visitor
245	Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	rare visitor
249	Threebanded Plover	<i>Charadrius tricollaris</i>	visitor
258	Blacksmith Plover	<i>Vanellus armatus</i>	breeding
264	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	rare visitor
266	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	visitor
269	Marsh Sandpiper	<i>T. stagnatilis</i>	visitor
270	Greenshank	<i>T. nebularia</i>	visitor
274	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	visitor
284	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	rare visitor
286	Ethiopian Snipe	<i>Gallinago nigripennis</i>	rare visitor
294	Old World Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	visitor
295	Blackwinged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	visitor
315	Greyheaded Gull	<i>Larus cirrocephalus</i>	rare visitor
338	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>	visitor
390	Senegal Coucal	<i>Centropus senegalensis</i>	rare visitor
433	Woodland Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon senegalensis</i>	rare visitor
435	Brownhooded Kingfisher	<i>H. albiventris</i>	visitor
436	Greyhooded Kingfisher	<i>H. leucocephala</i>	visitor
437	Striped kingfisher	<i>H. chelicuti</i>	rare visitor

Notes:

Cattle Egret: was last recorded breeding in the late 1960's

Threebanded Plover: was observed with breeding behaviour during July/August 2000.

Senegal Coucal: First positive identification was on 4 October 2000, on a fan palm. It was seen again two days later. We had fleeting sightings of a coucal in Feb 2000, but could not identify it.

Greyheaded Gull: First record of a single bird was on 26 May 1997. A single bird in breeding plumage was seen again on 16 June 2001.

These are the birds we have recorded so far. As the area flooded is so vast, it is possible that we have missed a few species and not recorded the breeding status of others. We are still looking forward to recording the first Water Dikkop.

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Summary

Es folgt ein Bericht über die Gründe und Überlegungen über das Vorkommen von Wasservögeln auf einer Farm im nordöstlichen Tsumeb Distrikt. Diese Beobachtungen fanden hauptsächlich ab Juni 1997 bis Juni 2000, während eines intensiven, persönlichen Vogelbeobachtungsprogrammes der Farmeigentümer statt. Beobachtungen fingen aber schon um 1991 / 1992 an.

Des weiteren geht es um die Erklärung des Entwässerungssystems von dem das Tsutsab Vlei ein Teil ist, sowie einer Beschreibung des Pflanzenwuchses der Gegend und an der Pfanne.

THE NESTING CHRONOLOGY AND BREEDING SUCCESS OF THE BLACK EAGLES OF FALKENSTEIN

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Aufzeichnungen: 1996 - 2000

Bevor ich zu den letzten fünf Jahren Beobachtungen komme, möchte ich über ein Gespräch mit Frau Frowerk Senior berichten. Sie wohnt auf dem letzten Kempinski Plot südlich der Auasberge.

Sie erzählte, daß sie die Felsenadler *Aquila verreauxii* öfters sehe und daß eines Tages einer ihrer Arbeiter aufgeregt angerannt gekommen sei: "Du musst den großen Vogel abschießen, er will deine Hühner fangen!" Nun, das tat sie nicht! "Laß den Vogel ruhig das dümmste, langsamste Huhn fangen. Das macht überhaupt nichts!" So geschah es. Einige Tage danach rannten alle Hühner in Deckung, um der drohenden Adlergefahr zu entgehen. Wieder war eines zu langsam, und abermals wurde ein Huhn gefangen. Danach fing der Adler keines mehr, da alle Hühner gelernt hatten, schnellmöglichst in Sicherheit zu flüchten - nach dem Motto: rette sich wer kann.

Ich habe geschmunzelt und war hocheifrig über die Handlung dieser Frau! Hoffentlich macht dieses Beispiel Schule!

Nun folgt das vorige Jahr: 2000

- 20.05: zwei Eier im Horst
- 18.06: zwei Eier im Horst
- 28.06: ein Kücken und ein Ei
- 29.06: ein Kücken, um 10h30 ist das zweite noch nicht geschlüpft
- 30.06: keine Beobachtung
- 01.07: ein Kücken, das zweite ist da und gesund
- 02.07: die Kain und Abel Syndrom nimmt ihren Lauf. Das stärkere Kücken zieht am Flügel des jüngeren und pickt es am ganzen Körper
- 04.07: das zweite Kücken ist vermutlich bereits tot, da es keine Lebenszeichen mehr von sich gibt
- 06.07: das schwächere Kücken ist total zerhackt
- 20.07: das überlebende Kücken entwickelt sich fantastisch Zwischen der 7. und 8. Woche hätte eine Beringung stattfinden sollen. Leider wurde der Jungvogel wesentlich früher beringt.
- 03.09: der Horst ist leer - gute zwei Monate nach dem Schlüpfen des ersten Kückens. Die Kücken bleiben etwa 3 Monate Nestlinge! Beide Altvögel fliegen umher.
- 04.09: im letzten Tageslicht finden wir den Vogel am Fuße der Steilwand am Übergang zur Geröllhalde. Er ist ganz munter, jedoch etwas schlapp. Wie lange er wohl bereits dort war, und was passiert war weiss Keiner.
- 05.09: Ich organisiere eine Rettungsaktion mit Bergsteigern, Fotografen und Suzan Mallet-Veale, eine Ornithologin. Es gelingt ihr den jungen Felsenadler in einer engen, dunklen Felsenspalte mit einem Handtuch zu packen. Dann wird er behutsam in einen Rucksack gesteckt. Wie groß er bereits ist! Viel größer als ein ausgewachsenes Huhn! Er paßt nicht ganz in den Rucksack hinein. Der Stoß muß draußen bleiben. So tritt er die kurze, leichte Klettertour total verdunkelt an, bis Andreas Schenk ihn nach 13 Metern Abseilen wieder im Horst "auspacken" kann. Als Futter werden ihm zwei tote Mäuse und frische Fleischstreifen mit in seine gewohnte Umgebung gelegt. Die Altvögel bleiben die ganze Zeit über unsichtbar. Werden sie ihren Zögling wieder annehmen?
- 06.09: Der Jungvogel steht etwa 20 Minuten im Horst.