
Mitgliedsbeiträge für die S.A.O.S. und die Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft für 1986 sind wie folgt:
Mitgliedschaft SWA Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft und SWA/Namibia Vogelklub R 25-00 pro Jahr
Mitgliedschaft SWA Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft und der Southern African Ornithological Society R 26-00 pro Jahr

Als ein Ordentliches Mitglied von sowohl der S.A.O.S. als auch der SWA Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft, erhalten Sie die populärwissenschaftliche Zeitschrift BOKMAKIERIE, das wissenschaftlich ausgerichtete Journal OSTRICH und ebenfalls die lokalen Mitteilungen LANIOTURDUS, weiteres Informationsmaterial und die allgemeinen Publikationen der SWA Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft.

Als Ortsgruppen-Mitglied des SWA/Namibianischen Vogelklubs stehen Ihnen der LANIOTURDUS, sowie die Mitteilungen und zusätzliche Informationen der SWA Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft zu.

Bemerkungen an Mitarbeiter:
Manuskripte sollten mit Schreibmaschine (oder in gut leserlicher Handschrift) geschrieben sein und zwar mit doppeltem Zeilenabstand auf A4 (30 x 21 cm) Format.

Skizzen, Karten und Tabellen sollten auf weissem Qualitätspapier mit schwarzer Tinte gezeichnet werden.

Klare Schwarz-weiß-Photographien (15 x 20 cm) können eingereicht werden, um die Arbeit zu illustrieren.
PARK Notes / Berichte

AFRICAN SKIMMERS BREEDING IN THE OKAVANGO RIVER
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[received 13 November 1986]

African Skimmers Rynchops flavicollis are endemic to sub-Saharan Africa where they are widely distributed on suitable rivers and lakes, from the 'Sahel' zone in the north to the Okavango and Zambezi river systems in the south. The world population is not known, but it is probably less than 5 000 pairs. The largest recorded gathering is of 1 500 birds (Britton 1980) but the largest known breeding colony only comprised 50 pairs (Modha & Coe 1969). Skimmers are heavily dependent on the availability of sandbanks, surrounded by deep water, which deter would-be predators. Sandbanks are used for roosting and especially for breeding, which takes place between July and October (Maclean 1985).

In September 1983 a colony of African Skimmers was found breeding on a sandbank in the Okavango River a few kilometres north of the Botswana border, within the Mahango Game Reserve, Namibia. A total of 13 nests with eggs were found and at least a further four to fifteen pairs were suspected of breeding. The principal colony was visited in the late afternoon, so that there would be no danger of the eggs or small chicks overheating while their parents were disturbed and off the sandbank. This colony contained twelve nests with eggs, and 61 additional nest scrapes. Skimmers probably make a number of nest scrapes before finally selecting the one where eggs will be laid. Judging from the number of birds in the area a further ten to fifteen pairs might have been about to lay eggs on this sandbank.

The twelve clutches examined contained a total of 28 eggs. There were four three-egg clutches and eight two-egg clutches. The mean weight of 28 eggs was 17.7 ± (S.D.) 0.8 g (range 16.0 g to 19.0 g). The mean egg size (n = 28) was 38.5 ± 1.2 mm (range 37.3 - 42.1 mm) x 28.8 ± 0.5 mm (range 27.6 - 29.7 mm). These measurements fall well within the limits of 104 egg-measurements reported elsewhere (Maclean 1985). The twelve nest scrapes were, on average, 188.0 ± 30.6 mm wide and 46.5 ± 6.6 mm deep.
African Skimmers have been identified as strong candidates for the proposed SWA/Namibia Red Data List for birds (Williams & Brown 1985). The southern African population is small and decreasing. Skimmers no longer breed at St Lucia in Natal, and the Kariba dam has flooded much potential habitat upstream and at the same time reduced river flow and suitable conditions downstream. Health and agricultural authorities issue and/or permit the use of quantities of pesticides and other chemicals potentially harmful to piscivorous (fish-eating) birds along the banks of the Zambezi, Kwando and Okavango river systems. In addition to these man-made hazards, the skimmers face many natural dangers. Several species of snakes, lizards and birds are known to take eggs and young nestlings. Eggs and chicks may be crushed by crocodiles and hippopotamuses, or washed away by waves (including those caused by boats), or by sudden floods.

The sandbanks where skimmers breed are usually devoid of vegetation and thus directly open to the full effect of the sun. If the parents are kept off the eggs or small chicks, the embryo or chicks may die from over-heating. Droughts which severely reduce water levels may enable terrestrial predators to cross to the sandbanks. During rainy seasons there may not be any sandbanks available for breeding. In all, the African Skimmer would appear to be leading an increasingly precarious existence.

REFERENCES

POSTSCRIPT
(Wilton Ratts and Roy Jones (Nature Conservation Officers) found 29 dead African Skimmer nestlings on one of the major sandbanks in the Okavango River, within the Mahango Game Reserve this year (G. Rimbo personal communication). Cause of death was unknown, but it was suspected that the nestlings died of over-heating as a result of human disturbance. Ed.)

BURYING OF EXCESS FOOD BY BLACK CROWS
During August 1985 at Sesriem in the Namib-Naukluft Park, two Black Crows Corvus corone were seen burying food in the sand.

After throwing table scraps out for this pair of birds, they consumed a portion of the food and then proceeded to bury the remainder at various spots in the surrounding sandy terrain. The following day they were seen to retrieve all the buried food and consume it. This behaviour was observed repeatedly throughout the duration of our two-week visit to Sesriem. On further inquiry we established that similar behaviour has been observed in Fled Crows Corvus albus at Namib Bay in the Skeleton Coast Park (F. Bridgeford, personal communication). We have been unable to find any records of similar behaviour by these birds elsewhere.

Perhaps the large flock of Fled Crows in the Sesriem area (and the enormous competition for food in this arid region) has led to the Black Crows having to adopt this unusual behaviour.

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Notes and News
Bemerkungen & Mitteilungen

SUCCESSFUL KEELASK OF A FLEDGLING MOUNTAIN CHAT
A well-feathered Mountain Chat Sphenops monticola nestling (about ten days old) was recently brought in by a cat, on the outskirts of Windhoek. The chick had a fracture of the tarsus just above the 'knot'. The fracture was set using masking tape, and it healed in five days, leaving an obvious callous.

The nestling was hand-fed on a roughly two-hourly basis, in response to vigorous begging behaviour and vocalisation. The chick was fed mouse, mealworms and a vitamin-mineral supplement. After ten days in captivity, the chick started to explore its environment, jumping in and out of the nest-box. Shortly thereafter the chick was transferred to an outside aviary where it fed itself, though begged for food (and received it!) whenever a human was present. This begging behaviour slowly diminished, and about ten days later (probably 25 - 30 days old) the chick was considered independent.

The chick was released at Avis Dam in November and has subsequently been sighted on a few occasions.

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