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CONTENTS

Nicht nur als Brut-, sondern auch als Schlafplatz wurden die Zuckerrohrbestände von den Blutschnabelwebern genutzt. Hinzu kamen nachts auch noch andere Weberarten, die in die Randgebiete der Brutkolonie einfielen, so daß jede Nacht mehr als 12 Millionen Vögel im Zuckerrohr nächtigten.

Es wäre interessant zu wissen, ob der Blutschnabelweber inzwischen auch im südlichen Afrika das Zuckerrohr besiedelt. Über die Gründe dafür, weshalb die Queleas im Zuckerrohr brüten, läßt sich vorerst nur spekulieren. Einige bereits genannte Vorteile für die Vögel liegen auf der Hand. Man könnte sich auch vorstellen, daß menschliche Störungen und vor allem der enorme Feinddruck, dem die Vögel in den Buschkolonien durch Predatoren ausgesetzt sind, doch weitaus größer ist und sie mehr zu dem etwas sicheren Lebensraum des Zuckerrohrs tendieren? Genauere Untersuchungen zu diesem Aspekt müßten noch erfolgen.

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BIRDS OF THE SWAKOP RIVER LAGOON
(Follow-up report 1992/1993)

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SUMMARY

A first study of birds of the Swakop river lagoon was done in December/January 1990/1991 (Brown 1991). This is a report on comparative observations done at the same time of year, the water body now being about 1/5 of what it was then. There was an average of 264 wetland birds of 19 species compared to 963 birds of 31 species in 90/91. The highest counts were 531 wetland birds of 28 species compared to 1381 birds of 36 species in the first report.

An average of 63 Hartlaub's Gulls was present (273 in 1990/91). There was again no breeding activity here, nor in the Swakopmund sewage works. The lagoon, bordered by dense Phragmites reeds on 2/3 of its perimeter still supports 28 species of waterbirds and 4 terrestrial bird species despite being almost dry and despite the disturbance by vehicles and persons with dogs and horses. Therefore the suggestion in the previous report: to develop this wetland for educational and tourism purposes is strongly supported.

INTRODUCTION

The previous first report on bird life in the Swakop river lagoon was based on 4 counts, two carried out in the morning and two in the late afternoon, between 30.12.90 and 3.1.91 (Brown 1991). At this time of the year, Swakopmund, favoured holiday resort, about doubles its population. - The water body was now about 0,5 ha (2,5 ha in 90/91) and tracks of vehicles and people with their pets were noticed on the dry areas of the lagoon. During our observation times (19h00, 17h45, 8h30, 7h00) between 30.12.92.and 4.1.93 the disturbance by this traffic was moderate, no vehicle was seen on the lagoon. Binoculars of 10x 50 and 8 x 32 were used. Two counts were done just after high tide peak and two after lowest water level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Between 249 (829) and 275 (1177) wetland birds of 25 (36) species were counted (the figures for 1990/91 are put in brackets). The highest count for each species amounted to 531 (1381) birds. Although the average number of birds with 264 (963) is 73% less than in 90/91 the amount of species has dwindled only by 39% (19 versus 31). The absence of large flocks of cormorants, gulls, terns and ducks would explain the low average figure found this time. 5,6% (3,4%) of all wetland birds were resident waders and this time 15% (7,5%) were palaearctic waders, 45% (27%) were flamingos, all but two being Lesser Flamingos.

The species with the second largest count were Hartlaub's Gulls with 23,8% (32,6%). As in the summer 90/91 no attempt at breeding was made by them,

Table 1. Counts of wetland birds at the Swakop River Lagoon in summer 1992/1993. Count a= 30/12/1992 at 19h00, b= 31/12/1992 at 08h30, c=03/01/1993 at 17h45, d= 04/01/1993 at 07h00.

Species	Counts a	b	c	d	mean	range
	High Tide		Low Tide			
Resident waders						
Whitefronted Plover	6	7	5	7	6	5- 7
Threebanded Plover	6	1	0	1	2	0- 6
Blacksmith Plover	6	4	2	4	5	2- 6
Avocet	1	1	2	2	2	1- 2
Palaearctic waders						
Turnstone	2	1	0	0	1	0- 2
Grey Plover	12	10	6	4	8	4-12
Curlew Sandpiper	6	9	3	7	6	3- 9
Little Stint	5	7	6	4	6	4- 7
Ruff	1	2	0	0	1	0- 2
Common Sandpiper	0	2	1	2	1	0- 2
Bartailed Godwit	52	0	0	0	13	0-52
Kittlitz Plover	0	2	1	2	2	0- 2
Ringed Plover	0	1	0	0	0	0- 1
Marsh Sandpiper	4	4	0	1	2	0- 4
Resident non-waders						
Dabchick	0	1	0	0	0	0- 1
Whitebreasted Cormorant	0	5	0	0	1	0- 5
Cape Cormorant	0	1	0	0	0	0- 1
Cape Teal	2	0	0	5	2	2- 5
Moorhen	3	7	5	6	5	3- 7
Kelp Gull	0	15	1	0	4	0-15
Hartlaub's Gull	94	6	132	22	63	6-132
Grey Heron	0	1	0	0	0	0- 1
Cape Wagtail	1	1	0	0	1	0- 1
Intra-African non-waders						
White Pelican	8	0	0	1	2	0- 8
Greater Flamingo	0	1	2	2	1	0- 2
Lesser Flamingo	2	180	88	201	118	2-201
South African Shelduck	2	2	0	0	1	0- 2
Palaearctic non-waders						
Sandwich Tern	36	4	6	0	10	0-36
Total number of birds	249	275	260	270	264	249-275
Total number of species	19	25	14	16	19	14-25
Highest count of each species	531					

neither here at the estuary, nor at the Swakopmund sewage works, which, sometimes, is their alternate breeding site. A visit to the sewage works in late December confirmed this.

The Phragmites reeds supported Common Waxbills, African Marsh Warblers, Masked Weavers and European Swallows as in the previous report. Naturally there were, again, more birds in the early morning than in the afternoon, after the day's disruption and noise.

We support the idea of an enclosure for the wetland: a fence on the north and south beach sides to prevent vehicles from entering, the erection of sign boards, guided tours by conservation officers and the construction of an observation hide, similar to the one at the Bird Paradise in Walvis Bay. This would be an asset for our wetland fauna - and for tourism in Swakopmund.

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NAMIBIA'S THIRD NATIONAL WETLAND BIRD SURVEY, JULY 1992

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INTRODUCTION

Namibia's third national wetland bird count, a part of the international effort to monitor wetland birds throughout the continent, took place in July 1992. Counters covered about 90% of our major wetlands. As usual, most counts were undertaken by nature conservation staff, but with an encouraging increase in the number of counters from the Namibia bird club. The areas counted, the species richness and total birds seen are summarised below.

RESULTS

Namibia, like other southern hemisphere countries continued to suffer from a prolonged drought, apparently the result of a strong El Nino event in the Pacific Ocean. Australia has also undergone a crippling drought and one can only assume that many wetland birds including temperate migrants must have had a torrid time of it in 1992. This is reflected in many dry pans, which needless to say had no birds. However, contrary to what one might expect in a major drought, the count for July 1992 was very high with over 170 000 birds recorded from 40 wetlands (Table 1). However, almost 30 fewer wetland species occurred than in July 1991. In that count 100 847 birds and 107 species were recorded from 27 wetlands.

DISCUSSION

The most likely explanation for the high number of wetland birds is that they became concentrated on larger water bodies (exactly those which were counted) as the smaller pans (e.g. Bushmanland) and dams dried up. Hence the higher numbers. The lower species diversity may be due to those species that require special conditions (e.g. flooded grasslands) not finding their critical habitat and dispersing. The large number of dry pans (below) support this possibility.