CONTENTS

KOLBERG H  Editorial .............................................................................................. 1
KOLBERG H  Birds on Farms: Selected results of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism’s 2012 Farm Questionnaire Survey ......................................................... 2
TREE AJ and BOORMAN MG  Pattern of occurrence of different populations of Sandwich Tern along the Namibian coast .................................................................................. 13
VAN ZIJL H  Birding in northern Namibia ...................................................... 18
CUNNINGHAM P  Some notes on Long-billed Crombec nests in a Windhoek garden .......................................................................................................................... 23
DEMASIUS E  Greater Kestrel prey to African rock python in Etosha ................................................................................................................................. 26
KOLBERG H  Summary of the 2014 Summer Wetland Bird Counts in Namibia ............................................................................................................... 28
THOMSON N  Rarities and Interesting Observations ........................................... 31
About the Namibia Bird Club ............................................................................... 36
During our end of the year visit to Etosha I always visit my favourite tree, the big umbrella thorn (Acacia tortilis heteracantha) at Charitsaub.

This tree is an island in the grass savannah and a shelter for many an animal. On one occasion we saw Pied and Cape Crow (Corvus albus, C. capensis) Red-necked Falcon (Falco chiquera) and Greater and Lesser Kestrel (F. rupicoloides, F. naumanni) enjoying the cool shade of the tree together.

This time there was nothing, or so it seemed, at least. We went to see the Blue Cranes (Anthropoides paradiseus) which come to breed at the waterhole every year. When returning I glanced up the tree again – and there it was – a Lesser Kestrel.

As I pressed the shutter release button of my camera it took off as if it had got a fright. Much surprised, I noticed some commotion in the tree and then I saw another bird in an unusual position in the tree.

Having my camera at hand I looked through it, instead of the binoculars, and automatically began to take photographs.

I then realized that a huge python had grabbed a Greater Kestrel by its head.

Once aware of what I was about to witness, my camera just continued to roll.

At first the head of the snake with the bird in its fangs was hanging down, resulting in the upside down position of the bird, but it quickly bent upward with its body now constricting the prey and holding it to swallow the kestrel bit by bit.
This was an extraordinary experience, which I was sure I would not to witness again soon. By the second I could see how the Greater Kestrel disappeared into the python. The python squeezed the kestrel to enable it to swallow the big bird and at the same time it “held” the bird.

After only six minutes the snake had swallowed the Greater Kestrel and it now appeared as if the snake was supporting its head so as not to be dragged down by the weight of the bird inside.

According to Dr Chris Brown (pers. comm.) this could only have been a Southern African or Rock Python.

The Southern African or Rock Python (*Python sebae natalensis*) is the longest and heaviest python found in Namibia, growing up to 5 meters in length.

They can often be found basking after feeding and will enter water to lie in wait for prey. They prefer a habitat of open savannah regions, usually rocky areas and riverine scrub. They are absent from true desert and dense rain forest.

**References**


The Cardboard Box Travel Shop: http://www.namibian.org/travel/reptiles/snakes/southern-african-python.html