About the Namibia Bird Club

The Namibia Bird Club was founded in 1962 and has been active since then. The club’s mission is to contribute to Namibian ornithology by, amongst other things, arranging regular birding outings, conducting bird ringing and atlasing excursions and educating the public about the value of birds. To achieve this, we organize monthly visits to interesting birding sites around Windhoek as well as regular visits to Avis Dam and the Gammams Sewage Works and occasional weekend trips further afield. Bird club members also participate in the African Waterbird Census twice a year.

Experienced birders are more than happy to help beginners and novices on these outings. If you have a transport problem or would like to share transport please contact a committee member. Depending on the availability of speakers and suitable material we present occasional lecture or video evenings at the Namibia Scientific Society premises. Members receive a digital newsletter, Namibia Bird News, which includes a programme of forthcoming events and the Bird Club journal, Lanioturdus.

The Namibia Bird Club is not affiliated to any global or regional organization and relies entirely on members’ subscriptions and donations to fund its activities.

The opinions expressed in this journal are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Namibia Bird Club or its committee.

Instructions to Authors

Lanioturdus is a journal dedicated to birds and birding. Although the journal’s primary focus is on Namibia, articles from other geographical parts of the globe will also be considered for publication. Authors should use common and scientific names of southern African birds as published in Roberts’ VII. For other regions, English and scientific names following BirdLife International’s species list (http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/species) should be used. Text should be submitted as a MS Word document. Photos, maps and figures should be sent as separate jpeg images, graphs as MS Excel charts or jpeg images and tables as MS Word or Excel documents. Please indicate in the article text where these should be placed.
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Meyer’s Parrot – an unusual nest site
Chris Brown
chrisbrown.namibia@gmail.com

In southern Africa Meyer’s Parrot *Poicephalus meyeri* is reported to lay from March to August with a peak in April-May. Their nest is usually a cavity in a large dead or living tree, either a natural hole or one made by a woodpecker or barbet (Hockey *et al.* 2005, Tarboton 2011).

![Figure 1: Meyer’s Parrot near its nest.](image)

On 11 April 2013 a Meyer’s Parrot was seen in a large baobab tree on the edge of the floodplain of the Okavango River in the Mahango area of the Bwabwata National Park in monad 1812S, 2144E. The bird drew our attention by its raucous screeching. It was soon apparent that there was a second bird calling in an un-melodious duet, but we could not locate it. After some time we traced the call to the vicinity of a scar some 9 m up and on the side of one of the large branches of the baobab. The scar was probably where a branch had broken off leaving a cavity. The cavity had been closed over with mud pellets by a swallow – typical of a Mosque Swallow *Hirundo senegalensis*, to create a nesting site. After some 10 minutes the nesting parrot emerged from the cavity and both birds vocalized together for a few minutes while hanging onto the scar just below the mud wall of the nest before the nesting bird re-entered its nest. It did not re-emerge for the next 20 minutes that we remained in the area.

![Figure 2: Laying months for Meyer’s Parrot in Namibia.](chart)

Namibia’s nest record card scheme has just four records for Meyer’s Parrot that give enough information to allow the laying month to be determined (Brown *et al.* 2015). These show that eggs were laid in January, March (twice) and April.

![Figure 3: A pair of Meyer’s Parrots on the outer edge of their nest in a baobab tree.](image)
The nest showing its construction of mud pellets, presumably by Mosque Swallows, to form the wall to enclose a cavity on the side of a branch.

We could not reach the nest so don’t know whether the parrots were incubating or brooding. We did not see any food being brought in, but as food is delivered infrequently this does not necessarily mean that there were no nestlings in the nest. Thus depending on the contents of the nest, the eggs could have been laid in any of the months from January through to April.

This observation presents two points of interest. The first is that the parrots were using a swallow nest instead of a conventional hole nest – either natural or made by a woodpecker or barbet. I am not aware of any previous examples of Meyer’s Parrots using swallow nests; and the second is that the swallow nest itself, if indeed it is that of a Mosque Swallow, would be only the second Mosque Swallow breeding record for Namibia. Three Lesser Striped Swallow *Cecropis abyssinica* nests were also found on the baobab used by the parrots, constructed on the undersides of large lateral branches. The Lesser Striped Swallow nests differ from the presumed Mosque Swallow nest in that they construct an enclosed bowl with a short entrance tunnel.

**Figure 5: A typical Lesser Striped Swallow nest on the underside of a large branch of a baobab tree in Mahango.**

**References**

