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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The plethora of public holidays in March and May certainly had an impact on several bird related activities in Namibia.

The Namibia Bird Club embarked on two major atlasing expeditions – one to the “far east” around Buitepos and one to the south around Maltahöhe. During these expeditions we managed to nudge the total number of pentads atlased in Namibia past the 10% mark – a truly remarkable achievement considering the number of active atlasers and the size of the country. Well done to all!

May was also the time of the traditional bird ringers’ get-together. This time it was decided to combine this esteemed occasion with the bird club excursion and in my humble opinion it was a resounding success. Due to the current drought the number of birds caught was very low (but then most of us don’t come to the get-together to ring birds) but the variety was quite amazing. In the end, between the ringers and the atlasers we racked up over 130 species, quite a number for an area that in places looked as if it had been swept with a broom. I think this may well be a recipe to be followed in the future.

As we are entering the “slowdown time” of winter this may be a chance to reflect on the past summer and perhaps write down some of the interesting observations we made (much like the contributions by Günther, Neil and Eckart in this issue) and send them to this, your journal.

Keep birding!
First some slightly older records from the Botswana side of the Chobe River just across the Namibia/Botswana border. Gavin and Marjorie Blair found a pair of Three-banded Coursers on 19 September 2015 and again at the same location on 08 October 2015. Also of interest was a hybrid Natal x Red-billed Spurfowl they saw near Ngoma Bridge on 28 February 2016.

Eckart Demasius saw ten Red-headed Finches at the water reservoir at Wlotzkasbaken on 12 March 2016, the first time he had seen this species there.

Also on 12 March 2016 Paul Gascoigne and Helen Pooley found a Greater Flamingo at the Gammams Water Treatment Works. They also confirmed the continued presence of five African Openbills and four White-backed Ducks there (See Lanioturdus 49(1)).

Paul Gascoigne and Helen Pooley found a Little Bittern and a Village Indigobird at Farm Monte Christo on 14 March 2016 but the highlight of this outing was the sighting of two Grey-headed Gulls (a very uncommon species in central Namibia) near the sand mining operation between the B1 and Farm Otjiseva.
Eckart Demasius found a number of interesting and uncommon species at Otjiwarongo sewage ponds on 14 March 2016. These included White-faced Duck, Banded Martin, White-winged Tern and Yellow-crowned Bishop.

The following day Eckart found three Woolly-necked Storks between Otjiwarongo and Outjo.

In the course of the Namibia Bird Club’s atlasing bash near the Transkalahari (Buitepos) Border Post Gudrun Middendorff and I saw a European Honey-Buzzard at Zelda Guest Farm on 20 March 2016. On the same day Quintin and Merryl Butcher saw four Yellow-billed Storks and an African Jacana at a dam in the vicinity.

Also on 20 March 2016 Mark Boorman found a Wilson’s Phalarope along the Paaltjies Road at Walvis Bay. The bird was still present until at least 24 March 2016.
On 21 March 2016 Gudrun Middendorff and I saw a small group of Lesser Flamingos at the Tilda Viljoen Dam at Gobabis.

Eckart Demasius reported a sighting of an African Harrier-Hawk in Windhoek on 21 March 2016.

Another interesting record from 21 March 2016 is that of a Common Whitethroat ringed by Ursula Franke-Bryson at Farm Hamakari near Okakarara.

Mark Boorman found a Red Phalarope at Mile 4 Saltworks on 26 March 2016.

Holger Kolberg reported forty nine Wattled Cranes at Nyae Nyae Pan on 26 March 2016.

Also on 26 March 2016 Wessel Swanepoel found a European Honey-Buzzard at Farm Eden near Kalkrand. This is the southernmost SABAP2 record for this species in Namibia.

Gudrun Middendorff and I found a small group of Temminck’s Courser at Farm Teufelsbach between Windhoek and Okahandja on 03 April 2016.

The highlights of the Namibia Bird Club’s morning walk at Gammams Water Treatment Works on 10 April 2016 were the sightings of four African Openbills and two White-backed Ducks. In addition a number of fairly uncommon species such as Purple Heron, Green-backed Heron and Black-crowned Night-Heron were observed.
Eckart Demasius found two Caspian Terns at Wlotzkasbaken on 16 April 2016, only the second time he has seen this species there. Another interesting sighting there that day was a large flock of Bradfield’s Swifts, no doubt pushed down to the coast by the east wind conditions prevailing at the time.

Figure 14: Caspian Tern © Eckart Demasius

On 17 April 2016 Gudrun Middendorff and I saw a pair of Red-billed Firefinches about 8 km north of Kappsfarm on the M53. This seems to be yet another slight range extension for this species.

Ivan Skillian reported seeing three “ducks” swimming on the sea near the Lüderitz Waterfront after dusk on 20 April 2016. One was described as having black and white face markings while the other two had grey heads. The only species that fits this description is South African Shelduck – a female and two males. While not usually found in marine environments they have been recorded fairly regularly in recent times on the Walvis Bay Lagoon.

The 2016 Namibian Ringers Get-Together/Namibia Bird Club atlasing bash from 30 April to 08 May 2016 proved to be a period of stork sightings in south central Namibia. On 30 April sixteen Black Storks were seen about 20 km west of Farm Nomtsas and on 03 May six were seen at approximately the same location. Also on 03 May a single Black Stork was seen at Nomtsas while on 04 May a flight of four birds was seen at the same location. On the morning of 05 May a single Black Stork was seen from Hudup Campsite east of Maltahöhe while that afternoon a flight of six birds was seen in the same vicinity. On 06 May two Marabou Storks were observed near Gras Game Lodge and later that afternoon fourteen Yellow-billed Storks were seen soaring there. This sighting was followed by sightings of a single Black Stork and a single Yellow-billed Stork later the same day. A single Marabou Stork was seen at a dam on Farm Gras on 07 May and this was followed by the sighting of ten Marabou Storks in the company of White-backed and Lappet-faced Vultures. On the return trip three Marabou Storks were present at the dam where there had been one earlier.

Another highlight at Gras Game Lodge on 07 May 2016 was the early evening fly past by large groups of Great White Pelicans. The first group comprised an estimated 120 to 150 birds and the second an estimated 400 to 450 birds. It was speculated that these birds had been out feeding in the drying pools of the Fish River and its tributaries and were returning to Hardap Dam to roost.

Franz Klein reported a Jackal Buzzard near Seis on 21 May 2016.

Blue Waxbills were seen by Ann Rusch in the course of the Namibia Bird Club’s outing to Farm Claratal southwest of Windhoek on 23 May 2016. This seems to be a further slight range extension for this species. Also present were numbers of African Quailfinches, a species which is probably more common than believed but difficult to locate and identify unless the call is known.
Jessica Kemper saw four White Storks at Second Lagoon, Lüderitz, on 24 May 2016. This seems very late in the year for this species as small numbers of (presumably) passage migrants are sometimes seen there in March/April and September/October.

Figure 15: White Storks © Jessica Kemper

In addition Trevor Hardaker’s SA Rare Bird News Reports mention the following rarities etc. seen in Namibia since mid-March 2016:-

Regular reports on the continuous presence of the Yellow-throated Leafloves (see Lanioturdus 49(1)) were received from Caprivi Houseboat Safaris Lodge near Katima Mulilo and it was reported on 18 March 2016 that the pair had built another nest and were incubating again. Excitingly another pair of these birds was reported on 13 March 2016 about 5 km downstream from the original location.

Another sighting of an Elegant-type Tern was reported from Mile 4 Saltworks on 23 March 2016 while a Wilson’s Phalarope was seen from the Paaltjies road at Walvis Bay on the same day.

Both a Eurasian Oystercatcher and a Lesser Sand Plover were reported at Walvis Bay on 14 April 2016.

The Lesser Sand Plover was still present at Walvis Bay on 19 April 2016 and two Greater Sand Plovers were also found there.

A Lesser Black-backed Gull was found at Lake Liambezi in the Zambezi Region on 26 April 2016.

A Western Marsh-Harrier was reported in the vicinity of Ngepi Camp on 27 April 2016.

A way off-range White-fronted Bee-eater was reported at Keerweerder in the NamibRand Reserve on 06 May 2016.

An Osprey was seen at Hardap Dam on 20 May 2016. (This is late in the year for this species so this bird will likely overwinter in southern Africa).