

NAMIBIA BIRD CLUB

a branch of the Scientific Society of Namibia
and the
Southern African Ornithological Society

NOTICE TO CONTRIBUTORS

Contributions of original papers and short notes (less than 2000 words) are invited, especially of broad birding interest to the membership of the club. Contributors should examine recent issues of the newsletter for guidance on suitability and presentation of manuscripts. Manuscripts, in English or German, should be typed in double-spaced on one side of paper. Sketches, maps and figures should be drawn on separate white paper with black ink. Good, high contrast colour and black and white photographs may be submitted to illustrate articles. Contributors are given wide latitude in his choice of material, thus all views and opinions expressed here are not necessarily those of the club. All material in LANIOTURDUS is copyright, and permission to reproduce any items must be negotiated with the editor.

Contributors using DOS or IBM-compatible word processor to prepare manuscripts should submit a 360K disk with a copy of the manuscript together with a typed copy, and inform the editor of the word processing programme which they have used. Submission of manuscripts on disk results in considerable saving in time and costs; these will be returned to the authors in due course.

A single copy of the volume issue in which your manuscript appeared is sent to the author. Additional reprints may be purchased at cost from the Secretary, Namibia Bird Club, P.O. Box 67, Windhoek, Namibia.

Contributions (including books for review) to LANIOTURDUS should be sent to the Honorary Editor, LANIOTURDUS, Department of Birds, P.O. Box 130, Windhoek, P.O. Box 1203, Windhoek, Namibia.

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL.....	2.
ARTICLES & REPORTS:	
BRANFIELD, A.: New bird records for the East Caprivi, Namibia	4.
BROWN, C.J.: Birds of the West Caprivi Strip, Namibia.....	22.
BRAINE, S.: Records of birds of the Cunene River estuary.....	38.
KOMEN, J.: Sexing Chestnut Weavers <i>Plocœus rubiginosus</i>	45.
KEMP, A.: What is the status of the Damara Redbilled Hornbill?	51.
HINES, C.J.H.: Leaves and flowers in the diet of Grey Louries and Yellowbilled Hornbills in Namibia	53.
MENDELSON, J.: Yellowbilled Hornbill feeds Grey Hornbill nestlings	54.
KOMEN, J.: Distribution of Greater Swamp Warblers in southern Africa	55.
WILLIAMS, A.J.: Kelp Gull feeding capacity	57.
ALLAN, D.G., W.K. STEELE & C.R. VELASQUEZ.: Lesser Blackbacked Gull at Etosha	58.
THOMSON, G.: A "white-bellied" Mountain Chat	59.
KOMEN, J.: Hartlaub's Francolin news	60.
WILLIAMS, A.J.: Crowned Cranes and other wetland birds of the Ekuma River and Etosha National Park	61.
BACHRAN, H.: Ein kleiner vogel als baumeister	63.
ARNOLD, E.M.: Letter to the editor	65.
PETZOLD, P.O.: Letter to the editor	66.

RECORDS OF BIRDS OF THE CUNENE RIVER ESTUARY

STEVE BRAINE

Ministry of Wildlife and Tourism, Private Bag 1020, Katima Mulilo, East Caprivi, Namibia.

INTRODUCTION

Although described as an 'estuary', the Cunene River mouth on the northern border of the Skeleton Coast Park, Namibia, cannot strictly be compared to estuaries elsewhere in southern Africa. The Cunene River mouth comprises a wetland delta system with tidal influences up to four kilometres upstream. The permanently open mouth leads into a lagoon about two kilometres wide by one kilometre long at high tide (Figure 1). Upstream from the lagoon, the river banks and a few islands are bordered by dense stands of reed Phragmites australis, providing suitable habitat for several species of birds. From about five kilometres upstream the river banks are covered with scattered Tamarix usneoides and Sueda plumosa scrub.

Elephants frequent the area and Nile Crocodiles, Monitors and Soft-shelled Turtles are commonly found in the river. Green Turtles have been encountered at the mouth and there appears to be an abundance of fish. Gemsbok, Springbok, Black-backed Jackal and Brown Hyena are common in the surrounding desert, and lions are also occasionally encountered.

Besides the Orange River on the southern border of Namibia, the Cunene River is the only other perennial river in Namibia which flows into the Atlantic Ocean. The Cunene River estuary is therefore an important wetland refuge for numerous migratory species, as well as many other species not commonly found in the region or elsewhere in Namibia.

Annotated lists of the birds of the Skeleton Coast Park have previously been presented (Ryan & Cooper 1984, Braine 1987, 1988). This paper specifically presents records of birds of the Cunene River estuary observed and caught during the period 1982 to 1988, and provides information on a number of previously unrecorded species.

RESULTS

Regular patrols were undertaken to the Cunene River estuary from 1982 to 1988. Bird observations and counts were carried out and I recorded the maximum number of individuals of a species found at any one time (Table 1).

Bird ringing was first undertaken at this locality in 1984, and by the end of 1987 a total of 188 birds, comprising 27 species, had been ringed and released. Vernacular bird names and numbers follow Maclean (1985), and species reported by Ryan & Cooper (1984) but not recorded in this study are marked with an asterisk (*). Pelagic bird species were not included in this report, unless observed on, or flying over, the lagoon and estuary.

DISCUSSION

It is evident from this study that the Cunene River estuary, although relatively small, is an important wetland refuge for several migratory bird species (Table 1). Other species, such as the Royal Tern, possibly occur here at the edge of their range, since they have only rarely been recorded south of the Cunene (Maclean 1985). During December 1987 a group of some 2000 Damara Terns were observed at the Cunene mouth for seven days, and a further 600 Damara Terns were counted along the coast between Cape Fria and Cunene mouth. If the estimated world population of Damara Terns is roughly 3000 - 4000 individuals (Clinging 1978), then the Cunene River estuary can be said to support more than half of this world population for a certain length of time during the year.

The vast reedbeds and abundant fish resources offer habitat and food for many other wetland species such as Goliath, Purple and Whitebacked Night Heron and Reed Cormorants. These species do not normally occur as far west as this study has indicated. Another species, Olive Bee-eater, although observed fairly close to the coast in the Hoarusib River, is commonly observed in the Cunene River estuary.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the numerous people who assisted me on many of the patrols to the Cunene through the years. Dr C.J. Brown commented on the manuscript and gave valuable advice.

REFERENCES

BRAINE, S. 1987. An annotated checklist of raptors occurring in and adjacent to the Skeleton Coast Park. Madoqua 15:

BRaine, S. 1988. Vagrants and range extensions found in and adjacent to the Skeleton Coast Park. *Lanioturdus* 24: 4-15.

CLINNING C.F. 1978. The biology and conservation of the Damara Tern in South West Africa. *Madoqua* 11: 31-39.

MACLEAN G.L. 1985. Roberts' birds of southern Africa. John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, Cape Town.

RYAN P.G. & J. COOPER. 1984. An annotated list of the birds of the Skeleton Coast Park. *Madoqua* 14: 79-90.

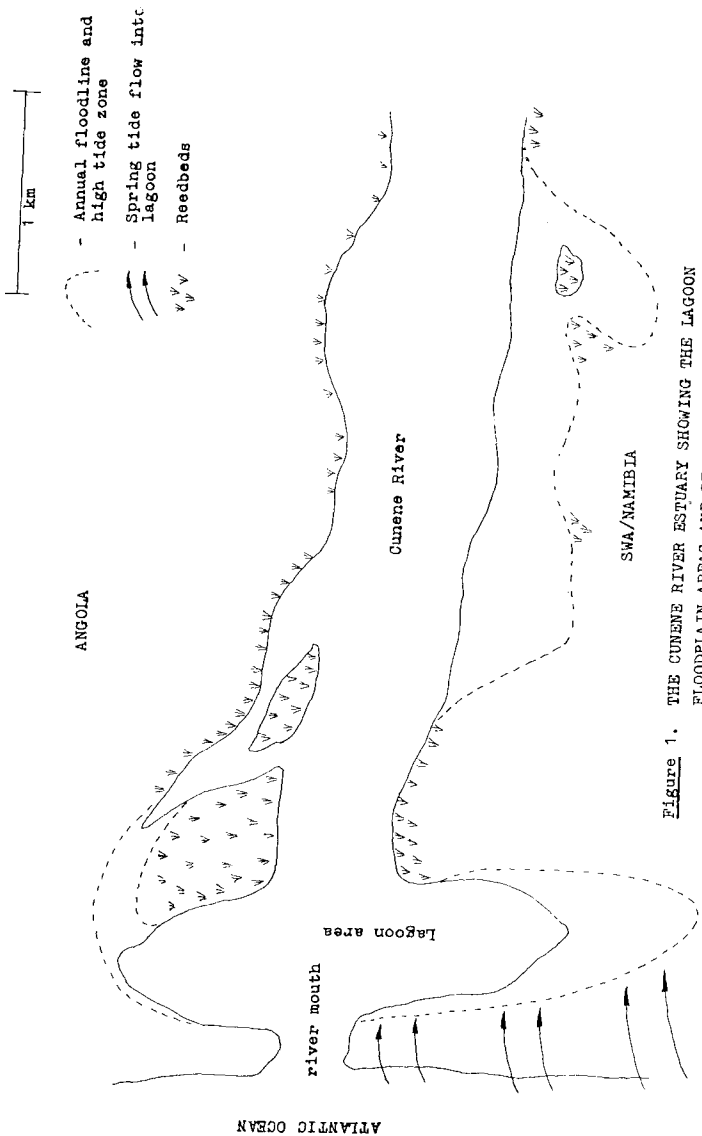


TABLE 1
Bird species recorded at the Cunene River mouth, Skeleton Coast Park, Namibia. Species marked with an asterisk were recorded by Ryan *et al.* (1984), but not during this study.

Roberts Number	Species		Highest number of birds recorded at one time	Birds proven to breed	Residents possibly breed	Species ringed since 1984
	Common Name	Scientific Name				
1	Ostrich	<i>Struthio camelus</i>	6			
7*	Blacknecked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>			X	
49	White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus oncorhynchus</i>	86			
53	Cape Gannet	<i>Morus capensis</i>	3			
55	Whitebreasted Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	150 +	X		
56	Cape Cormorant	<i>P. capensis</i>	300 +			
58	Keed Cormorant	<i>P. africanus</i>	44	X		
60	Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>	6			
62	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	5			
63	Blackheaded Heron	<i>A. melanoccephala</i>	1			
64	Goliath Heron	<i>A. goliath</i>	6			
65	Purple Heron	<i>A. purpurea</i>	1			
67	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	11		X	
71	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	1		X	
77	Whiteback Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	2			
81*	Hammerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>			X	
83*	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>				
95	Abdim's Stork	<i>C. abdimii</i>	1			
96	African Spoonbill	<i>Platalea alba</i>	2			
97	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>	40 +			
102	Lesser Flamingo	<i>P. minor</i>	300 +			
106	Egyptian goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>	12			
107*	Cape Teal	<i>Anas capensis</i>	44		X	
107*	Hottentot Teal	<i>A. hottentota</i>			X	
108*	Redbilled Teal	<i>A. erythrorhynchos</i>			X	
112*	Cape Shoveller	<i>A. smithii</i>				
148*	African Fish Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>				
170	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	4			
171	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus calidus</i>	1			
173	Hobby Falcon	<i>F. p. minor</i>	2		X	
181	Rock Kestrel	<i>F. tinnunculus</i>	2		X	

Roberts Number	Species		Highest number of birds recorded at one time	Birds proven to breed	Residents possibly breed	Species ringed since 1984
	Common Name	Scientific Name				
200	Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	1			
201	Harlequin Quail	<i>C. delegorguei</i>	1			
213	Black Crane	<i>Amaurornis flavirostris</i>	Plentiful	x		x
226	Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	4			
228	Redknobbed Coot	<i>Fulica cristata</i>	6			
223	Purple Gallinule	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	4		x	
232	Ludwig's Bustard	<i>Neotis ludwigii</i>	1			
242 ¹	Painted Snipe	<i>Rostratula benghalensis</i>	10			
243	Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	3			
246	Whitefronted Plover	<i>C. marginatus</i>	160	x		x
247	Chestnutbanded Plover	<i>C. pallidus</i>	40			x
248	Kittlitz's Plover	<i>C. pecuarius</i>	6			x
249	Threebanded Plover	<i>C. tricollaris</i>	30 +			x
250	Mongolian Plover	<i>C. mongolus</i>	1			
254	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	40 +			
258	Blacksmith Plover	<i>Vanellus armatus</i>	2			
262	Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	60 +			
264	Common Sandpiper	<i>Tringa hypoleucos</i>	10 +			
269	Marsh Sandpiper	<i>T. stagnatilis</i>	4			
270	Greenshank	<i>T. nebularia</i>	80 +			
271	Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	60 +			
272	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>C. ferruginea</i>	600 +			x
274	Little Stint	<i>C. minuta</i>	300 +			x
281	Sanderling	<i>C. alba</i>	800 +			x
284	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	80			
288	Battailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	40			
289	Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	1			
294	Whimbrel	<i>A. phaeopus</i>	3			
294	Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	60			
295	Blackwinged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	2			
298	Water Dikkop	<i>Burhinus vermiculatus</i>	3			
307	Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	3			
309	Pomarine Skua	<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>	1			
312	Keip Gull	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>	Plentiful			
315	Greyheaded Gull	<i>L. cirrocephalus</i>	Plentiful			
316	Hartaub's Gull	<i>L. hartaubii</i>	4			x

Roberts Number	Species		Highest number of birds recorded at one time	Birds proven to breed	Residents possibly breed	Species ringed since 1984
	Common Name	Scientific Name				
322	Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	36			
323	Royal Tern	<i>Sterna maxima</i>	2			
324	Swift Tern	<i>S. bergii</i>	4			
326	Sandwitch Tern	<i>S. sandvicensis</i>	100 +			
327	Common Tern	<i>S. hirundo</i>	1000 +			
328	Arctic Tern	<i>S. paradisaea</i>	1 mortality			
334	Damara Tern	<i>S. balaenarum</i>	2000	x		
337	Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>	20 +			
339	Whitewinged Tern	<i>C. leucopterus</i>	12			
349	Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba guinea</i>	Plentiful	x		
354	Cape Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia capicola</i>	Plentiful	x		
355	Laughing Dove	<i>S. senegalensis</i>	Plentiful	x		
395	Marsh Owl	<i>Asio capensis</i>	2			
428	Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>	Plentiful	x		x
429	Giant Kingfisher	<i>C. maxima</i>	4			
439	Olive Bee-Eater	<i>Merops superciliosus</i>	8			
518	Europea Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Plentiful			x
520	Whitethroated Swallow	<i>H. albigularis</i>	2			
522	Wiretailed Swallow	<i>H. smithii</i>	2			
529	Rock Martin	<i>Hirundo fuligula</i>	Plentiful	x		
533	Brownthroated Martin	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>	Plentiful			
532*	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>				
547	Black Crow	<i>Corvus capensis</i>	2		x	
548	Piep Crow	<i>C. albus</i>	12 +			
567	Redeyed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus nigricans</i>	Plentiful	x		x
586	Mountain Chat	<i>Oenanthe monticola</i>	Common	x		
589	Familiar Chat	<i>Cercomela familiaris</i>	Common	x		
590	Tractrac Chat	<i>C. tractrac</i>	Common			
631	African Marsh Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus baeticatus</i>	Common	x		x
635	Cape Reed Warbler	<i>A. gracillirostris</i>	Common	x		x
664	Fantailed Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	Common	x		
665	Desert Cisticola	<i>C. aridula</i>	Common	x		
685	Blackchested Prinia	<i>Prinia flavicans</i>	Common			x
689	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	2	x		x
711	African Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla aguimp</i>	Common			x
713	Cape Wagtail	<i>M. capensis</i>	Common	x		x

Roberts Number	Species		Highest number of birds recorded at one time	Birds proven to breed	Residents possibly breed	Species ringed since 1984
	Common Name	Scientific Name				
716	Richard's Pipit	<i>Anthus novaeseelandiae</i>	1			
732	Fiscal Shrike	<i>Lanius collaris</i>	Common		x	
788	Dusky Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia fusca</i>	Common		x	
803	Cape Sparrow	<i>Passer melanurus</i>	Common	x		
810*	Spectacled Weaver	<i>Ploceus oculorisor</i>				
814	Masked Weaver	<i>P. velatus</i>	Common	x		x
815	Lesser Masked Weaver	<i>P. intermedius</i>	Not Common	x		
816	Golden Weaver	<i>P. xanthops</i>	Not Common	x		x
84c	Common Waxbill	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>	Common		x	

SEXING CHESTNUT WEAVERS Ploceus rubiginosus

Joris Komen

The State Museum of Namibia, P.O. Box 1203, Windhoek, Namibia

INTRODUCTION

The Chestnut Weaver Ploceus rubiginosus is considered to be uncommon and localised in southwestern Africa, with seasonally erratic fluctuations in numbers and poorly understood dispersal during periods of non-breeding (Braine & Braine 1971, Maclean 1985, Berry *et al.* 1987). When adults are in eclipse plumage, it is virtually impossible to determine the sex and age of individuals in the field. This problem is compounded by a dearth of published morphometric information (Maclean 1985, Komen in press). Many species of otherwise monomorphic birds show some degree of sexual size dimorphism and appropriate body measurements may be used to determine the sex of individuals. I have shown elsewhere that Chestnut Weavers can be accurately sexed, using relatively complicated discriminant analysis of body measurements (Komen in press). This method requires access to a calculator, an item which is rarely found in a ringer's box of tricks, so it is useful to provide an alternative, simple and convenient, method of determining sex of Chestnut Weavers in the hand.

METHODS

Forty-six Chestnut Weavers were measured during ringing operations on Otjongoro Farm near Omaruru in 1985 (20° 53' S, 15° 38' E) and near Tsumkwe, Bushmanland, Namibia (19° 37' S, 20° 27' E) in 1986. All other specimens were study skins (n = 188) and anatomical specimens (n = 26) from the collection of the State Museum of Namibia.

Body mass of live-caught individuals was measured with a 50 g Pesola balance, to the nearest gram. Amongst other body measurements, standard wing-length (distance between the carpal joint of the bent wing to the tip of the longest primary) and tail-length (from insertion to tip of longest rectrix) were measured with a steel rule. All measurements made with the steel rule were taken to the nearest 0.5 mm.

Of the 260 specimens and live birds measured, 45 were sexed by obvious nuptial plumage and 26 were sexed by