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## Editorial

The trials of the Namibia Bird Club continue with it mainly being a Windhoek orientated organization. The number of articles submitted to its journal the *Lanioturdus* has withered to almost unacceptable levels. In 2006 only one issue of the *Lanioturdus* was published and here we are half way through 2007 and finally the editor has enough articles to publish what probably will be the only issue of 2007.

There is obviously an interest in birding within Namibia since there are now many subgroups specializing in aspects of birds. There is Raptors Namibia who publish an on line newsletter once a month. The Crane Working Group, Raptor Road Counts, Rare and Endangered Species Trust working on vultures, and the Wetland Bird Counts which enumerate all the wetlands twice per year.

I know that there are birders observing birds because of the rare birds which have been reported to the magazine *Birds and Birding* from Namibia.

Once again I appeal to all members to help the Namibia Bird Club. If you want to keep the club viable you must also do your part and try and get new members to join. We are currently down to fewer than 100 members.

Fortunately there is good news and there has been a recent increase in the number of articles submitted and hopefully this trend will continue and we could see another issue published this year.

I hope readers will note the addition to the Namibia list of Ruppell's Vulture. There are probably more juvenile Ruppell's Vultures visiting Namibia than we realize. Observers should keep their eyes open when watching vultures at a kill, you may be able to add a new species to your list. If you do see one of these birds please try to photograph it.

## Some notes on the breeding of the Crowned Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax coronatus*, from Bird Rock, Namibia.

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### Introduction

Crowned Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax coronatus*) are endemic to southern Africa and occur along the west coast from the vicinity of Swakopmund to Cape Infanta in South Africa (Maclean 1985, Tarboton 2001). Their status according to Maclean (1985) is viewed as “uncommon resident” with a total breeding population estimated at 2 700 pairs, breeding at 48 known sites along the coast (Tarboton 2001). Breeding can occur throughout the year, but generally between December to April (Berry 1974), November to January (Tarboton 2001) and October to February (Maclean 1985). A clutch usually consists of 2-3 eggs (Tarboton 2001).

A study conducted by Berry (1974) in 1973 indicated that *P. coronatus* had established a viable breeding colony below the guano platform known as Bird Rock ranging between 100-150 adult birds. Bird Rock guano platform is situated approximately 400 m from the shore and lies 7½ km north west of Walvis Bay between Swakopmund and Walvis Bay in the Erongo region. The guano platform was built in 1930 (18 000 m<sup>2</sup>) to create a “permanent home” for bird populations and to accumulate guano deposits. By breeding below the platform on the supporting structure, *P. coronatus* however play no role in the guano industry (Berry 1974).

### Methods

A survey of the nests took place during low tide using a lightweight 2 m ladder to reach the nests. All the nests were counted, checked for eggs and chicks and the relevant data recorded on a spreadsheet for later analysis. The site was visited on five occasions (January and February 2002 to get acquainted with the site) with

field work conducted on 28 March, 15 April and 6 June 2002. Ninety eight support poles with attached struts were visited.

### Results

On the 98 supporting poles visited, 161 nests were recorded of which 92.5% were occupied with 185 eggs (56 nests with eggs) and 104 (50 naked & 54 down) chicks. The maximum number of nests per supporting pole was 4 with a mean number of eggs and chicks being  $2.5 \pm 0.85$  and  $1.96 \pm 0.74$ , respectively (Table 1).

**Table 1.** *P. coronatus* nest, eggs & chick data as observed at Bird Rock between March and June 2002.

	Nests	Eggs	Chicks
<b>N</b>	161	185	104
<b>Mean</b>	1.66	2.5	1.96
<b>± SD</b>	0.63	0.85	0.74
<b>Min.</b>	1	1	1
<b>Max.</b>	4	4	3

### Discussion

Results during this survey indicate that *P. coronatus* can breed later – i.e. March to June – than the usual breeding seasons as stated by Berry (1974), Maclean (1985) and Tarboton (2001).

The breeding population of *P. coronatus* seems to be stable or even growing slightly since 1973 when Berry (1974) counted 104 nests during January, 37 being occupied with 71 chicks and 25 eggs.

Clutch size is similar to data presented by Berry (1974) who gives an average clutch size of 2.5 (2-4) at the same location while Tarboton (2001) gives a range of 1-6 (usually 2-3) and Maclean (1985) 2-8 (rarely 5).

Fish stocks generally seem to be on the decline along the Namibian coast with other marine birds – e.g. Bank Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax neglectus*) – selecting for currently non-commercial fish species – e.g. Pelagic Goby (*Sufflogobius bibarbatus*) – rather than their favoured (normal) prey species (Lakay & Cunningham 2005). What effect such changes could have on the breeding success of *P. coronatus* is yet unclear and should be investigated further. Regular monitoring of the *P. coronatus* population at Bird Rock should be encouraged.

#### Acknowledgement

Special thanks to Heidi Scryptzeck, Deon Louw and the rest of the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources team who accompanied me to the platform.

#### References

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## Gocheganas Outing on 15 October 2006

Gudrun Middendorff

Early on Sunday morning we left for Gocheganas Game Lodge, which is situated south east of Windhoek and is less than a 30 km drive out of town. It was overcast and a cool and windy day.

On arrival we were greeted by Annemarie Stritter, who volunteered to guide us. Packed with binoculars and bird books we left the parking lot in an easterly direction. At the first “gronddam” an amazing number of ten Pied Avocets were counted. Some other waterbirds like Red-billed Teal, Maccoa Duck, Little Grebe and Egyptian Geese were sighted. The characteristic shrill piercing whistles of the Red-crested Korhaan accompanied our walk through the bush. Flocks of Helmeted Guineafowl crossed the footpath leading to the next waterhole. Species like doves, hornbills, flycatchers, prinias, starlings and chats helped to fill our bird list. Not only birds drew our attention, but waterbuck, rhino, springbok, kudu and oryx were observed. On the plains below the lodge itself we spotted big herds of wildebeest, zebra, also a giraffe and baboons. Even the biggest birds, some ostrich made their appearance. At the last water point an abundance of waxbills, finches, sparrows and pytilias were busy quenching their thirst. A pair of Pale Chanting Goshawk delighted with an aerial display. Only the Grey Go-away-bird was not impressed by our presence.

At the end we were given a tour around the lodge. For anybody feeling lazy, it is rewarding to just sit on the veranda with binoculars and a drink and enjoy the amazing scenery below.

Our thanks go to the Stritter family, who made this beautiful morning possible.