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## The long and the short of it: Some statistics from the 2012 Lappet-faced Vulture chick ringing in the Namib

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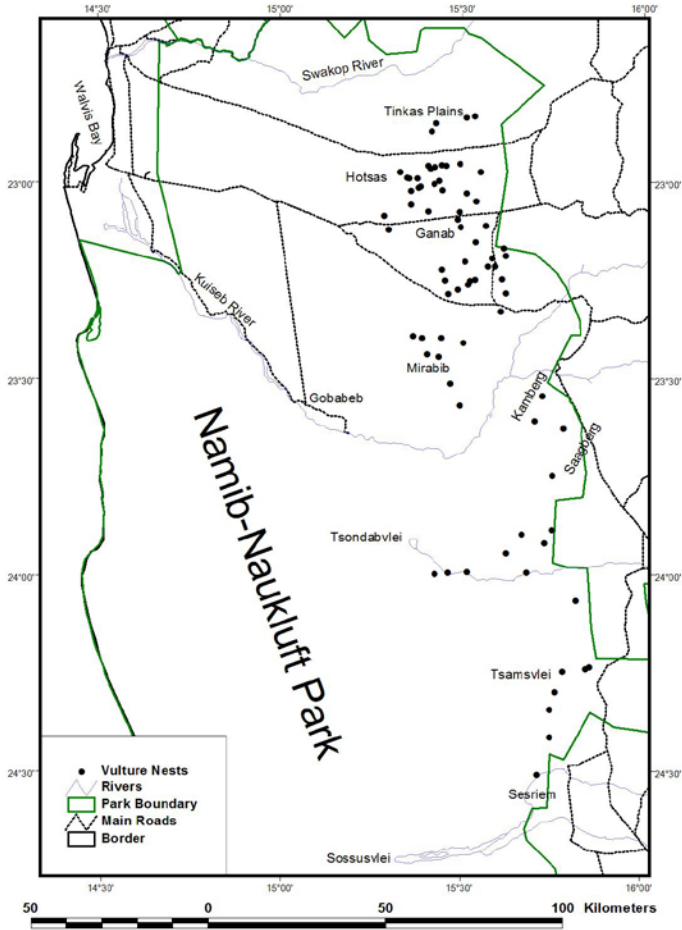
Vultures Namibia once again ringed Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotos* chicks in the Namib-Naukluft Park during October 2012 as part of an on-going long-term study of the breeding of these vultures in the central Namib. A total of 76 nests were visited from Sesriem in the south to near the Swakop River in the north (Figure 1). The chicks ringed hatched between 12 June 2012 and 26 August 2012. We use the standard wing length and the table in Mundy (1982) to determine the age of the chick and hence the hatching date.

The trees used for nesting were predominantly *Acacia erioloba* with a

total of five different tree species used in 2012 (Table 1). The height of the nest above the ground is measured to the nearest centimetre using a tape measure and the average, minimum and maximum height are given in Table 1. This is also the height of the tree because the nests are always in the top-most branches of the tree. The average tree height compares favourably with the height given by Mundy (1982) for Gonarezhou (7.1m) where birds preferred *Terminalia* trees but is quite a bit lower than the average 8.8m height recorded by the same author for north-western Zimbabwe.

**Table 1:** Tree species, number of trees and average, minimum and maximum height of trees used by nesting Lappet-faced Vultures in the Namib in 2012

Tree species	No	Average height (m)	Min	Max
<i>Acacia erioloba</i>	62	6.59	3.58	11.30
<i>Acacia tortilis</i>	7	6.82	4.00	10.20
<i>Acacia reficiens</i>	4	4.08	2.80	5.80
<i>Ziziphus mucronata</i>	2	3.38	3.00	3.75
<i>Euclea pseudebenus</i>	1	3.50	3.50	3.50
<b>Total</b>	76	6.33		



**Figure 1:** Lappet-faced Vulture nests in the Namib-Naukluft Park, Namibia

The trees are individually numbered which allows us to record how often a tree is used. Three trees were used once before, one tree twice and one

tree seven times before (Table 2). It is interesting that one nest was used two years in a row i.e. in 2011 and 2012 (tree No. 327).

**Table 2:** Tree number and years used by nesting Lappet-faced Vultures in the Namib

Tree Number	Used in
63	1995, 1997, 1999, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012
219	1999, 2012
250	2000, 2012
327	2008, 2011, 2012
400	2010, 2012

The size of the nest, the cup and the depth of the cup are also recorded and a summary of that data is given in Table 3 (n = 71). Mundy (1982)

gives data on nest and cup diameter and a comparison between his and our data is given in Table 4.

**Table 3:** Values on nest and cup area\* and cup depth of Lappet-faced Vulture nests measured in the Namib in 2012

	Nest Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Cup Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Cup Depth (mm)
<b>average</b>	2.07	0.66	90.5
<b>std dev</b>	0.72	0.23	39.4
<b>min</b>	0.73	0.23	0.0
<b>max</b>	4.34	1.32	190.0

\*Nest and cup area used rather than diameter as nests are usually elliptical in shape.

**Table 4:** Comparison of nest parameter data given by Mundy (1982) and this study

	Mundy		This Study	
	Nest	Cup	Nest	Cup
<b>n</b>	30		71	
<b>Average (mm)</b>	1780	715	1799	1004
<b>Std. Dev. (mm)</b>	262	165	345	193
<b>Min. (mm)</b>			1100	600
<b>Max. (mm)</b>			2950	1500

The average minimum distance between nests was 3.967km (std. dev. = 2.839km) with a range of 0.524 to 15.873km. This is about a kilometre

more than the figure given by Mundy (1982) for Gonarezhou (2.9km ±2.1) but quite a lot less than the figure for north-western Zimbabwe (7km).

## References:

Mundy, P.J. 1982. *The comparative biology of southern African vultures*. Vulture Study Group, Johannesburg.

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