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## Editorial

I don't believe that anyone can deny that the Namibia Bird Club is moving forward. The chairperson's report published in this issue outlines some of the activities of the Namibia Bird Club including outings, wetland counts and our well attended Birding Big Day as well as the donations given to various bird rehabilitation centres and projects.

Your committee has managed to keep the subscriptions at their current levels for several years now. In this day and age where the price of everything is constantly increasing we would like to continue to maintain them at the current levels but this will depend on whether or not we can increase our membership base. If we can attract more members we will not need to increase the subscriptions. If you have enjoyed our outings and enjoyed reading Lanioturdus spread the word, bring your friends along and get them to join as well. It could just save you some money!

Mark Paxton's article in this issue certainly is a thought provoking one. Has he found species way off their recorded range? Or perhaps undescribed subspecies? Or even hybridized birds? Does the breastband of Shelley's/Marico sunbird change colour with age? It seems that there is plenty of scope for an ornithologist in his region.

In this issue we also have a trip report by Helga Detering written in German. Helga has however included the English common names of all species mentioned in the text in brackets

## Summary of the 2009 Winter Wetland Bird Counts in Namibia.

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During the month of July 2009 volunteers once again participated in the winter wetland bird counts all over Namibia. A total of 27 wetlands were counted resulting in just over 99,000 birds of 87 species. The number of sites being counted is up thanks to the Namibia Bird Club, which is now conducting regular counts at Avis Dam, the Gammams (Windhoek) Sewage Works and Monte Christo. The Walvis Bay Ramsar site tops the list with over 50,000 birds, followed by Sandwich Harbour and the Mile 4 Saltworks. Walvis Bay also tops the list in terms of number of species, followed by Lake Oponono, Sandwich and Monte Christo – thirty species or more were recorded at each of these wetlands. Once again the count for the Orange River Mouth Ramsar site is only a partial count because no simultaneous count was conducted on the South African side.

Only two Great Crested Grebe were seen, one at Mile 4 and one at Sandwich, perhaps confirming that species' rare status in Namibia. The presence of 1827 Black-necked Grebe at Cape Cross once again confirmed that wetland's status as a potential Ramsar site. Three Yellow-billed Storks were seen at Monte Christo, an unusual sighting for this time of the year. The majority of flamingos counted were Greater Flamingos, outnumbering Lesser Flamingos by a ratio of about 4.5:1. As can be expected for this time of the year, the numbers of waders and shorebirds are quite low, yet good numbers of e.g. African Black Oystercatcher (256), Chestnut-banded Plover (1952) and White-fronted Plover (3641) were observed. Just four Damara Terns were recorded, three at Cape Cross and one at Sandwich, indicating that this species has moved up the coast to its wintering quarters. An Osprey was recorded

at the Orange River Mouth and ten Red-necked Phalaropes were seen at Walvis Bay.

I'd like to thank all the counters for making the effort and taking the time to do the counts.

**Table 1: Numbers of birds and species for each site counted.**

Site	Birds	Species
Aeroplane Bay	124	6
Agate Beach	196	3
Avis Dam	92	10
Cape Cross	3236	21
Ekuma River	105	7
Fischer's Pan	10	2
Gammams Sewage Works	188	17
Griffith Bay	43	9
Grosse Bucht	104	8
Guano Bay	55	8
Hardap Dam	620	12
Lüderitz Sewage Works	93	4
Mile 4 Saltworks	4333	24
Monte Christo	316	30
Naute Dam	340	16
Okondeka	9	2
Oponono	2313	32
Orange River - Skilpad to Hohenfels	660	3
Orange River - Hohenfels to Bridge	486	26
Orange River Mouth	780	29
Radford Bay	98	5
Sandwich Harbour	29654	32
Second Lagoon Lüderitz	530	13
Shearwater Bay	8	2
Swakop River Mouth	103	13
Walvis Bay	52626	36
Walvis Sewage Works	2056	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>99178</b>	<b>87</b>



Photo: Eckart Demasius

**Table 2: Numbers of birds and species counted for each group of wetland birds.**

Group	Birds	Species
<i>Grebes</i>	9698	3
<i>Pelicans</i>	609	1
<i>Cormorants and Darter</i>	31019	6
<i>Herons and Egrets</i>	725	11
<i>Storks</i>	95	4
<i>Ibises and Spoonbill</i>	75	3
<i>Hamerkop</i>	4	1
<i>Flamingos</i>	32115	2
<i>Cranes</i>	0	0
<i>Geese and Ducks</i>	2702	12
<i>Rails, Gallinules and Coot</i>	340	4
<i>Jacanas</i>	6	1
<i>Waders and Shorebirds</i>	11667	26
<i>Gulls, Terns and Skimmer</i>	10104	9
<i>Birds of Prey</i>	8	3
<i>Additional Species</i>	11	2

### **Trends in Namibian Waterbird Populations 1: Introduction and Overview**

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Data on wetland bird numbers has been collected in Namibia on an *ad hoc* basis since the early 1960's. Since 1991 regular counts have been conducted at several sites and thus a considerable amount of data has accumulated. This article and the ones to follow is a summary of the available data and an attempt to derive population trends for selected wetland bird populations.

To date (July 2009), data from 1703 counts at 172 places has been entered into a database. A total of 177 different species of waterbird have been counted at these sites. Blacksmith Lapwing is the species most commonly recorded, having been seen in 915 counts (Table 1). In terms of numbers counted, Common Tern are just ahead of Cape Cormorant (Table 2) however this is not a true

reflection because the latter were not always counted.

Data from 1991 to 2008 was used in the trend analysis and the highest number seen per site in each respective year was taken (to account for migratory species). Only sites with nine or more annual counts and where a species was recorded three times or more were used. Using this approach, population trends for 88 species could be derived. Population trends were generated using the computer programme TRIM (Trends and Indices for Monitoring data). TRIM is a programme for the analysis of time series of counts with missing observations, as is the case with many of the counts considered here. The programme can be used to estimate indices and trends and to assess the effects of covariates on these indices and trends (see Pannekoek and van Strien 2005 for an explanation of the theory and methods). In this study no covariates were introduced i.e. the trends are based purely on presence/absence data.

For the majority of the species (n=60) the programme gives the trend as "Uncertain" and five populations are considered "Stable" (Table 3). Twenty populations are increasing, of which three, Common Moorhen, African Jacana and White-fronted Plover, are "strongly increasing". Reed Cormorant and Cattle Egret are "moderately declining" whilst Little Stint are "steeply declining", the reasons for this will be investigated in the various species accounts to follow. When one compares the trends from this study with trends given by Wetlands International (2006) there are only six species for which the trend is given as increasing by both (Table 4). A further nine species are listed as increasing by Wetlands International where the trend was given as uncertain by this study. One species, Cattle Egret, is increasing according to Wetlands International but shows a declining trend in this study. It must be borne in mind though that Wetlands International deals with populations at the sub-regional level, in this case southern Africa, and hence local trends may not be reflected. Wetlands International