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Editorial

English common names of bird species occurring in southern Africa : this topic seems to be the subject of a never ending debate. Recently *The Hornbill*, the journal of BirdLife Lowveld, published letters fuelling this debate over the ever changing English common names of our birds. My article in the last issue of *Lanioturdus* shows however that "new" bird names are nothing new at all and that the common names of species have been changing and evolving for many years.

The question does arise, however, as to which names a journal such as *Lanioturdus* should use. It is my policy as editor to use the common names used in Roberts VII and I shall continue to do so until another definitive publication is issued. I believe it is necessary to choose a standard and stick to it in order that most readers will be able to determine which species are being discussed. The common names used in Roberts VII are also for the most part used in all the newer publications such as Roberts Bird Guide, Sasol 3, Sinclair and Ryan, Oberprieler and Cillié and the new revised edition of Newman's. I am sure that most readers have access to at least one of these publications. Thus I shall stick to the names Comb Duck, Osprey, Barn Owl, Cattle Egret and Great Egret as per Roberts VII in spite of the fact that I understand that these are now Knob-billed Duck, Western Osprey, Western Barn Owl, Western Cattle Egret and Western Great Egret. I shall also continue to use the name Black-headed Canary and not the split Black-headed Canary/Damara Canary as it occurs in Sasol 3 – it seems that the authors of Sasol

on its migration between the Lesotho highlands and its central African wintering grounds).

Narina Trogon *Apaloderma narina* (Stephens 1815) Narina is variously described as a Khoikhoi beauty, Le Vaillant's servant and Le Vaillant's mistress. Le Vaillant had apparently found her given name "difficult to pronounce, disagreeable to the ear and very insignificant to my ideas" and therefore gave her a new name, Narina, which in the Khoikhoi language signifies a flower.

Northern Giant Petrel *Macronectes halli* (Mathews 1912) Named after the Australian Robert Hall (1867-1949) who went to Kerguelen Island with a Norwegian expedition in 1897 and who travelled in Siberia in 1903 collecting birds for the Rothschild Museum. He later became curator of the Tasmanian Museum and was a founder member of the Royal Australian Ornithologists Union.

The final article in this series will begin with Orange River Francolin and end with Wire-tailed Swallow.

Trends in Namibian Waterbird Populations 4: Herons and Egrets Part 2

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This article continues the series on trends in Namibian waterbird populations and summarises count data for herons and egrets for the period 1977 to December 2008. For each species the Red Data Book (RDB) status, both global and Namibian, is given, the population trend as per Wetlands International, the number of times the species was counted, the number of times it has passed the 1% population criterion, the maximum count and the sites where it has passed the 1% population criterion.

The local trend is calculated for the period 1991 to 2008 only because continuous data is available for that time. The computer programme TRIM was used for these analyses (see an earlier publication for the selection criteria and methods). (*Lanioturdus 43-2 Ed*). For each species the number of sites used in the analysis, the number of observed counts (this includes zero counts), and the sites containing more than 10% of the total number counted are given. A trend and slope are given. A slope value of 1 would indicate a perfectly stable population, whereas any value above 1 means a positive trend and a value of less than 1 a negative trend. Population trends are graphically presented as indices relative to a base year (in this case 1991) and thus all have a value of 1 for 1991. An index value of 2 indicates a doubling of the population relative to 1991 and an index of 0.5 would mean half of the 1991 figure.

Trends for thirteen species of heron and egrets could be determined. Out of these, two are increasing, two are stable, one is decreasing and the remainder are uncertain. None of the species considered has ever passed the 1% population mark in any of the counts, in fact, figures for all the species are well below the 1% figure.

(Larger scale replications of the graphs in this article are attached to the end of this edition).

4.7 Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*)

IUCN RDB Status: Least concern
Namibia RDB Status: ?
WI Trend: Unknown



Photo: Eckart Demasius

This bird is encountered at most of the counting sites and appears in large numbers at the two coastal Ramsar sites of Sandwich Harbour and Walvis Bay. Numbers at other sites fluctuate greatly possibly reflecting the availability of water at those sites.

No of times counted: 456
 No of times past 1% population (=3500): 0
 Maximum count: 275 at Walvis Bay on 26 April 1997
 Past 1% population at: Nowhere

Trend analysis

Number of sites: 19
 Number of observed counts: 249
 Number of missing counts: 93
 Total number of counts: 342
 Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:

Site	Number	%
Sandwich Harbour	1361	23.1
Walvis Bay	2004	34.0

Overall slope: Stable
 1.0057 ±0.0159



Photo: Eckart Demasius

This is the most common egret in southern Africa and its population is apparently increasing which makes the fact that it is decreasing in Namibia somewhat alarming. Numbers are especially decreasing in the north east and perhaps the use of agricultural pesticides and cattle dips may be to blame for this.

No of times counted: 238
 No of times past 1% population (=10000): 0
 Maximum count: 1000 at Olushandja Dam on 2 February 1998
 Past 1% population at: Nowhere

Trend analysis

Number of sites: 15
 Number of observed counts: 205
 Number of missing counts: 65
 Total number of counts: 270

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:

Site	Number	%
Lake Oponono	1265	20.7
Mahango Game Reserve	1015	16.6
Olushandja Dam	1779	29.0
Shamvura	783	12.8
Tsumkwe Pans	649	10.6

Overall slope: Moderate decline (p<0.05)
 0.9457 ±0.0275

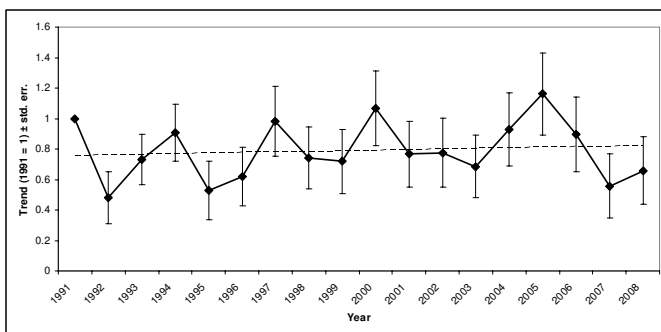


Figure 1: Trend of Little Egret population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

4.8 Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*)

IUCN RDB Status: Least concern
 Namibia RDB Status: ?
 WI Trend: Increasing

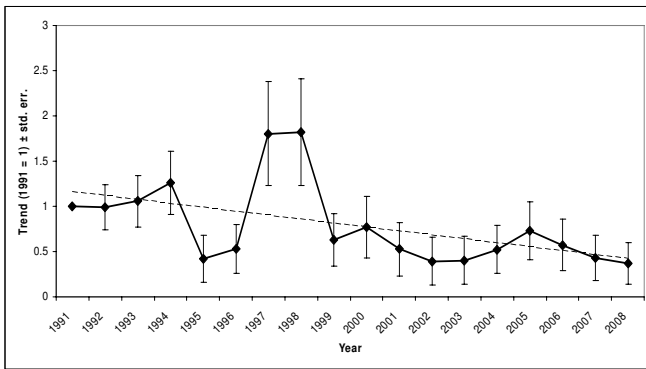


Figure 2: Trend of Cattle Egret population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

4.9 Squacco Heron (*Ardeola ralloides*)

IUCN RDB Status: Least concern

Namibia RDB Status: ?

WI Trend: Stable



Photo: Neil Thomson

This is one of the common herons in north-eastern Namibia and this is reflected in the counts with only odd sightings from elsewhere.

No of times counted: 78

No of times past 1% population (=4500): 0

Maximum count: 236 at Mahango Game Reserve on 19 July 2002

Past 1% population at: Nowhere

Trend analysis

Number of sites:	4
Number of observed counts:	49
Number of missing counts:	23
Total number of counts:	72

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:

Site	Number	%
Mahango Game Reserve	1075	69.8
Shamvura	314	20.4

Overall slope: Moderate increase ($p < 0.05$)

1.1566 ± 0.0697

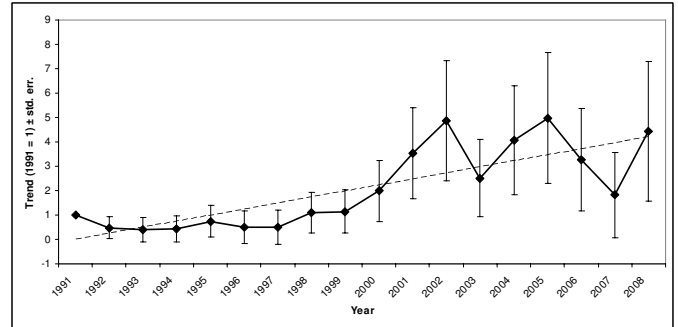


Figure 3: Trend of Squacco Heron population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

4.10 Rufous-bellied Heron (*Ardeola rufiventris*)

IUCN RDB Status: Least concern

Namibia RDB Status: Endangered

WI Trend: Unknown



Photo: Eckart Demasius

This heron is common in the wetlands of north-eastern Namibia but is less frequently seen than Squacco Heron. In 2003 unusually high numbers were seen at three sites, resulting in a spike in the population trend.

No of times counted: 43

No of times past 1% population (=1000): 0

Maximum count: 41 at Shamvura on 20 April 2003

Past 1% population at: Nowhere

Trend analysis

Number of sites: 3
 Number of observed counts: 39
 Number of missing counts: 15
 Total number of counts: 54

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:

Site	Number	%
Mahango Game Reserve	88	46.3
Shamvura	85	44.7

Overall slope: Uncertain
 0.9238 ± 0.0420

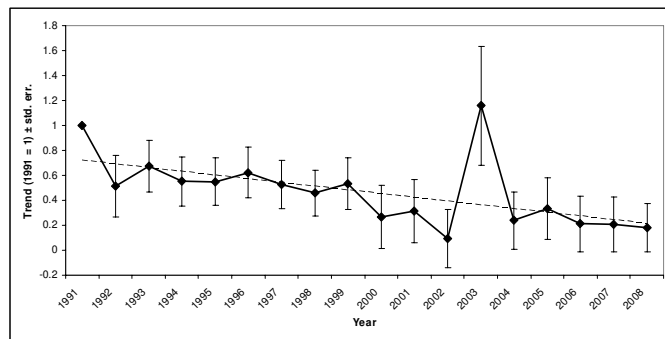


Figure 4: Trend of Rufous-bellied Heron population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

4.11 Green-backed Heron (*Butorides striata*)

IUCN RDB Status: Least concern
 Namibia RDB Status: ?
 WI Trend: Stable



Photo: Eckart Demasius

This is another of the herons more common in Namibia's north east than elsewhere.

No of times counted: 47

No of times past 1% population (=10000): 0
 Maximum count: 87 at Mahango Game Reserve on 22 August 2004
 Past 1% population at: Nowhere

Trend analysis

Number of sites: 2
 Number of observed counts: 26
 Number of missing counts: 10
 Total number of counts: 36

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:

Site	Number	%
Mahango Game Reserve	511	73.7
Shamvura	182	26.3

Overall slope: Uncertain
 1.0993 ± 0.0591

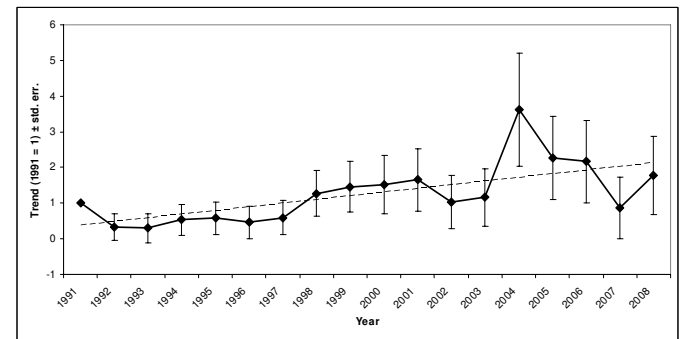


Figure 5: Trend of Green-backed Heron population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

4.12 Black-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*)

IUCN RDB Status: Least concern
 Namibia RDB Status: ?
 WI Trend: Stable



Photo: Eckart Demasius

This species is widespread in Namibia and has been counted at many sites throughout the country. It has vanished from Sandwich

Harbour though because of the disappearance of the freshwater wetland there.

No of times counted: 77
 No of times past 1% population (= unknown): ?
 Maximum count: 65 at Shamvura on 26 July 2004
 Past 1% population at: Nowhere

Trend analysis

Number of sites: 6
 Number of observed counts: 77
 Number of missing counts: 31
 Total number of counts: 108

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:

Site	Number	%
Mahango Game Reserve	167	31.5
Sandwich Harbour	55	10.4
Shamvura	265	50.0

Overall slope: Uncertain
 0.9634 ±0.0530



Photo: Eckart Demasius

The solitary, shy and skulking nature of this bird makes it difficult to count.

No of times counted: 55
 No of times past 1% population (=1000): 0
 Maximum count: 14 at Walvis Bay sewage works on 25 March 1996
 Past 1% population at: Nowhere

Trend analysis

Number of sites: 4
 Number of observed counts: 49
 Number of missing counts: 23
 Total number of counts: 72

Sites containing more than 10% of the total count:

Site	Number	%
Mahango Game Reserve	27	31.4
Shamvura	26	30.2
Walvis Bay Sewage	28	32.6

Overall slope: Uncertain
 0.9522 ±0.0471

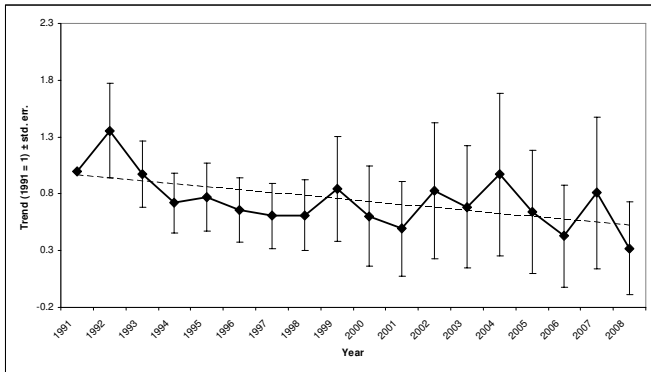


Figure 6: Trend of Black-crowned Night-Heron population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

4.13 Little Bittern (*Ixobrychus minutus*)

IUCN RDB Status: Least concern
 Namibia RDB Status: ?
 WI Trend: Unknown

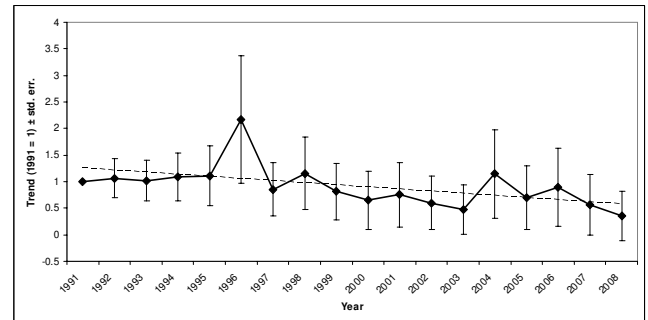


Figure 7: Trend of Little Bittern population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

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The Intrepid Wetland Counter

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On a rainy Sunday, I launched my boat for the requested action. First I had to pull it out from underneath the stuff stacked on top of it and clean it properly. You know, it hadn't been used for a year or so.

Then I packed it onto the bakkie and went off to the vlei, collecting eight of my assistants, keeping two of them as strategic reserves. Oh, I did not forget the cold box with some red wine (it was too cool for beer), and all the other stuff necessary for birding. Arriving at the vlei we first had to assess the situation – and decide who would take a hold where on the boat and in what direction to go first.

We put the boat down carefully into the lush green, I arranged my pillows and on my order: "HEAVE, FORWARD!!", we (they and the boat), started moving. The paddles were in the way, we really had no need for them but we took them along just in case. I ordered a course towards the most distant shore, having to cross the deepest possible places. The going was slow, my transporters had to try to avoid the rocks where they could not bypass them. Yes, they had put on their gumboots. Ears wide open and listening, the lenses of the binoculars getting hot from searching, we slowly started to realize we were moving through a totally green wasteland, devoid of any water. I, as a last hope, directed my

boatmen to the well hoping to find something there, but in vain. Only some fish jumping – for what? As my assistants were getting tired and especially fed-up with my obsession and as I was starting to fear a mutiny, I suggested a compromise idea of giving them a rest and going to fetch the bakkie myself.

So we were home quite early, having done our duty for the summer wetland count on Tsutsab Vlei.

Results: Zero, nix, zilch, keine wetland birds. The vlei was bone dry except for some dampness due to a little rain the previous night!

The Ongoing Story of Doofus/Mad Monty

(See *Lanioturdus* 43-1)
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Shortly after we rehung the nest log in the witgat tree on 13/09/2009 it appeared that Doofus (the Monteiro's Hornbill) and his mate had again claimed the nest. The birds were seen and heard around the nest site quite frequently and I was able to catch and ring the female when she flew into a mistnet I had set to catch smaller birds. Doofus even seemed to have given up attacking the window glass (at least when I was at home).

Then I noticed that the birds were around less frequently and on 08/11/2009 Gudrun noticed that bees had again moved into the nest. Doofus and his mate inspected the nest every few days and Doofus in particular would perch just in front of the nest entrance giving a mournful toko-toko-toko call for long periods while the female perched some distance away. We speculated that the birds had been looking for another potential nest site and when they were unable to find one had come back to see if perhaps the bees had left. On 17/11/2009 I got Roland Graf zu Bentheim to remove the bees again. This left me in a bit of a quandary – should I use this nest log again? – two swarms of bees had already taken up residence in it – or should I try to get another suitable nest box/log? Would Doofus and his