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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

Löwen die sich auf den Weg zum toten Tier machten. Wir kehrten sofort um und tuckerten hinter ihnen her. Wir hatten so ein Glück in den letzten 30 Minuten unseres Aufenthaltes noch solch eine Szene miterleben zu dürfen.

Unser Reisemaskottchen war die Gabelracke (Lilac-breasted Roller). Von Windhoek bis an den Chobe begleitete uns dieses "Juwel" der Vogelwelt.

Als alles von den Booten wieder in den Autos verstaubt war, fuhren wir in Botswana von Kasane zur Grenze bei Ngoma. Auf dem Wege sahen wir sechs riesige Hornraben (Southern Ground Hornbill). Vom Baobab (-baum) aus hatten wir die Ngomabrücke die über den Chobe führt im Blick und winkten Namibia am anderen Ufer zu. Bei der Caprivi Houseboat Lodge angekommen (am Sambesi) - schloss sich unser Kreis der letzten 4 Tage.

5/09/09 Mahangu Safari Lodge

Von Katima Mulilo via Bagani kehrten wir zur Übernachtung bei der Mahangu Safari Lodge ein, die am westlichen Ufer des Okavangos liegt, entlang der Straße zum Mahango Game Reserve. Einige Bungalows, Zelte und Campingplätze haben einen tollen Blick auf den Fluss. Aussichtsturm, sowie drei "Holzdecks-plattformen" stehen für Tierbeobachtung zur Verfügung. Der Weißbrauenrötel (White-browed Robin-chat) und der Schmarotzermilan (Black Kite) sowie eine Rotschnabel Frankolin-henne (Red-billed Spurfowl) mit fünf Kücken wurde unter andern gesehen.

Morgens um 6.30 Uhr wurde das letzte mal gemeinsam am Campingplatz gefrühstückt und wir beobachten noch die Nilpferde die ganz aktiv eine Wasserfontäne nach der anderen hochpusteten. Wir alle genossen den tollen Sonnenaufgang und die Stille über dem Okavango bevor wir die lange Reise nach Windhoek antraten. Abends um 18.00 Uhr kamen wir glücklich und wohlbehalten in Windhoek an.

Wetland Bird Counts in Namibia 1: Introduction and Overview

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In more than 100 countries, millions of waterbirds are counted each year. Wetlands International coordinates the International Waterbird Census (IWC) throughout the world and the data is used to e.g. designate Wetlands of International Importance and Important Bird Areas. Namibia has participated in these counts since 1990 and hence a considerable set of data has accumulated.

Data is on hand for 1703 (as at July 2009) waterbird counts at 172 sites in Namibia. The earliest counts are from 1976 and a peak in terms of sites counted was reached in 1995 when 73 wetlands were counted. The number of counts peaked in 1997 when 149 counts were received but has gradually declined (Figure 2). The reasons for this decline are several.

Most of the counts were done by persons in their spare time at their own cost. The rising cost of living has made it almost impossible to carry these expenses without some sort of financial support from elsewhere; e.g. a visit to the pans around Tsumkwe is a 2000 km round trip from Windhoek which will involve considerable expenses in terms of fuel alone. Many of the counters stopped because they never received any feedback. Wetlands International produced an annual report on the African Waterbird Census that was distributed to all counters. However, since 2001 no such report has been produced, apparently because of financial constraints.

From Figure 1 one may get the impression that geographical coverage for the counts is

fairly good. However, the sites that are regularly counted nowadays are along the coast and around Etosha. Some very important wetlands such as the pans around Tsumkwe and the Caprivi wetlands are not counted anymore.

The site with the most counts is the Swakopmund Sewage Works (154 counts) where monthly counts have been conducted since June 1995. The Lüderitz Peninsula is actually counted as nine separate sites and the pans in the vicinity of Tsumkwe are also counted separately (13 sites). For the purpose of this analysis the separate counts for these two areas were combined because it is envisaged that there is considerable movement of birds between the various counting localities. The data for the Orange River Mouth is incomplete and hence was not considered here. This means that there are 29 sites with more than ten counts, and for almost half of them there is a declining trend in bird numbers (Table 1). In terms of species counted there are twice as many sites where the number is increasing as where they are decreasing. The coastal wetlands are where bird numbers have declined (Table 2) whereas it is at the inland sites where species have decreased (Table 3).

Type	Up	Down	Stable
Coastal	3	5	0
Inland	5	5	0
Per. Rivers	2	0	0
Dams	4	4	1

Table 3: Comparison of species trends between wetland types.

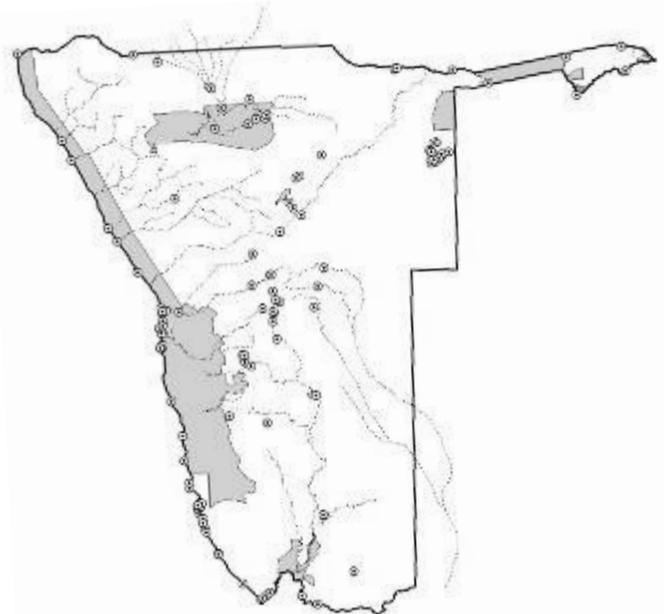


Figure 1: Wetland count sites in Namibia.

Trend	Birds	Species
Up	14	16
Down	14	8
Stable	1	5

Table 1: Trends in numbers of birds and species.

Type	Up	Down	Stable
Coastal	3	5	0
Inland	5	5	0
Per. Rivers	2	0	0
Dams	4	4	1

Table 2: Comparison of bird number trends between wetland types.

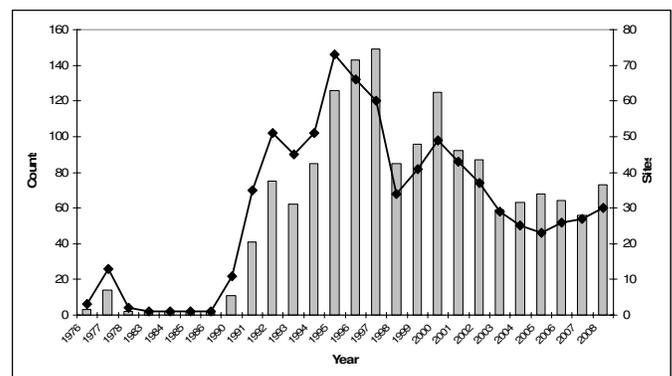


Figure 2: Number of waterbird counts (bars, left hand y-axis) and sites counted (line, right hand y-axis) in Namibia from 1976 to 2008.