

LANIOTURDUS

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Editorial

Bird populations are dynamic – always on the move! I see this at my own home. I have lived in this house for over 23 years and up until about four years ago I had never seen a southern red bishop there – in 2009 alone I ringed 136 at this location! In September 2010 I experienced an irruption of common waxbills, a species I very seldom see in my garden. Over a period of 122 days until the end of the year we ringed 205 and then the numbers seen and caught dropped off sharply suggesting that most of them had moved on. In Lanioturdus 43(4) I mentioned the five pied crows I saw on 11/08/2010 across two Quarter Degree Squares between Rundu Airport and Ncaute where the species was not recorded in the Atlas. I had not seen this species there in about ten previous trips and I have not seen it there again since then on my subsequent trips through this area.

The above examples illustrate how dynamic certain populations actually are – some suddenly appearing and remaining, others merely moving through an area. With the climate changes currently being experienced we are seeing the earlier arrival of some migrants and also later departure dates. (In Lanioturdus 43-4 we published some of Günther Friederich's observations on the early arrival of grey-headed kingfisher and European bee-eater in our "Rarities and Interesting Observations" section).

In our "Rarities and Interesting Observations" section in this issue we have a report of a Sabine's gull seen at Kalkheuwel waterhole in the Etosha National Park – as far as I have been able to determine this constitutes

much close attention is given to the nest. Cats, especially those that are in feral colonies, whether these colonies are fed or not, are always in direct competition for natural food items with small birds of prey. Cats are also known to disturb nest sites and predate on chicks. Quite often because of disturbance young birds leave the nest before they are really able to fly. These young birds are at the mercy of people as they are unable to easily or quickly get back to a safe high perch on a building. Every year NARREC receives calls from people who have found young birds on a city street.



Rock kestrel – photograph provided by Liz Komen

Wetland Bird Counts in Namibia 4: Coastal Wetlands

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This is the last article in a series describing the results of regular wetland bird counts in Namibia. This paper looks at eight coastal sites, including two of Namibia's four Ramsar sites i.e. Sandwich Harbour and Walvis Bay. Unfortunately data for Namibia's other coastal Ramsar site, the Orange River Mouth, is

incomplete and hence it has not been included in this analysis.

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

4.1 Cape Cross



Aerial view of Cape Cross - Photo Eckart Demasius

This wetland is about 120km north of Swakopmund and consists of a series of natural sea-fed ponds that are partially used for commercial salt production. A large guano platform has also been constructed and this no doubt is an added attraction to birds. The high count in October 1997 is due to the presence of over 24,000 Common Terns.

Area counted: Approximately 5km²

Number of counts: 21

Last counted on: 18 July 2008¹

Average number of birds: 5444²

Average number of species: 16

Maximum number of birds: 29545³

Maximum number of species: 22

Species past 1% population level: Black-necked Grebe (15)⁴, Cape Cormorant (7)⁵, Chestnut-banded Plover (1), Common Tern (1), Curlew Sandpiper (1), Greater Flamingo (6), Lesser Flamingo (4), Swift Tern (2), White-breasted Cormorant (3).

¹ After a lengthy break counts were re-started in July 2008 and are ongoing.

² This number excludes Cape Cormorants because that species was not always counted.

³ Excludes Cape Cormorants.

⁴ Numbers in brackets denote the number of times the 1% population was passed.

⁵ This number should be higher because Cape Cormorants were not always counted.

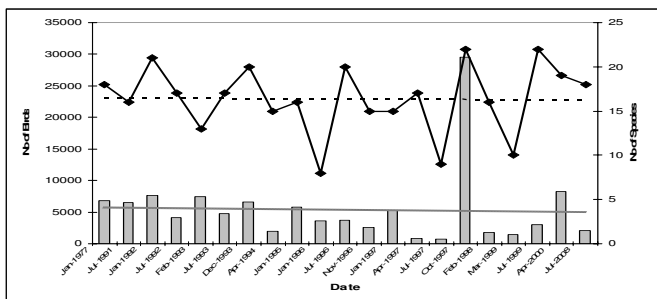


Figure 1: Number of birds (bars, left-hand y-axis) and species (diamonds, right-hand y-axis) counted at Cape Cross and the trend over the counting period (dashed line = species trend, solid line = bird numbers trend). Cape Cormorants have been excluded from this graph because they were not always counted.

4.2 Kunene River Mouth

The Kunene River mouth forms the north-western corner of Namibia and is shared with Angola. The site consists of the river, the reed fringed banks, some vegetated islands and a small tidal lagoon at the actual mouth. The area is very difficult to access hence counts are only done on an *ad hoc* basis.

Area counted: Approximately 5km²
Number of counts: 10
Last counted on: 10 July 2008
Average number of birds: 849
Average number of species: 19
Maximum number of birds: 2250
Maximum number of species: 32
Species past 1% population level: Caspian Tern (1), White-breasted Cormorant (3).

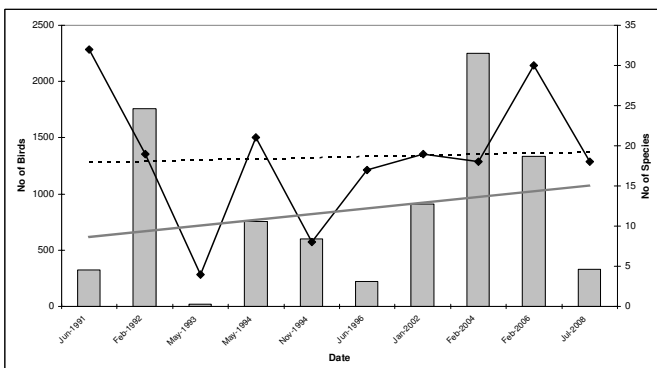


Figure 2: Number of birds (bars, left-hand y-axis) and species (diamonds, right-hand y-axis) counted at the Kunene River Mouth and the trend over the counting period (dashed line = species trend, solid line = bird numbers trend).

4.3 Lüderitz Peninsula



Grosse Bucht, Lüderitz - Photo Eckart Demasius

This is a collection of nine sites, mainly bays but also the sewage works, that are counted around the town of Lüderitz.

Area counted: Unknown
Number of counts: 31
Last counted on: 1 August 2008⁶
Average number of birds: 2198
Average number of species: 24
Maximum number of birds: 5835
Maximum number of species: 36
Species past 1% population level: Black-necked Grebe (1), Greater Flamingo (3), Lesser Flamingo (4), African Black Oystercatcher (22), White-fronted Plover (4), Kelp Gull (5), Hartlaub's Gull (15), Swift Tern (5).

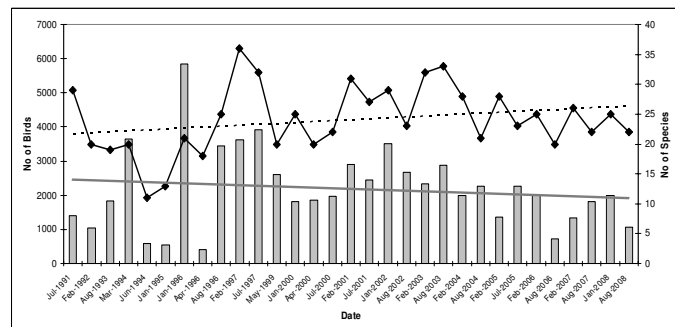


Figure 3: Number of birds (bars, left-hand y-axis) and species (diamonds, right-hand y-axis) counted on the Lüderitz Peninsula and the trend over the counting period (dashed line = species trend, solid line = bird numbers trend).

⁶ These counts are ongoing.

4.4 Mile 4 Saltworks



Photo: Eckart Demasius

This site consists of a series of shallow evaporation ponds for commercial salt production and a large guano platform. The high count in January 1997 is due to the presence of 50,000 Common Terns.

Area counted: Unknown.

Number of counts: 22

Last counted on: 20 July 2008⁷

Average number of birds: 8732⁸

Average number of species: 27

Maximum number of birds: 60122⁹

Maximum number of species: 38

Species past 1% population level: Black-necked Grebe (18), Cape Cormorant (11), Chestnut-banded Plover (3), Common Tern (1), Greater Flamingo (13), Hartlaub's Gull (3), Kelp Gull (2), Lesser Flamingo (13), Pied Avocet (3), Ruddy Turnstone (1), White-breasted Cormorant (6), White-fronted Plover (1).

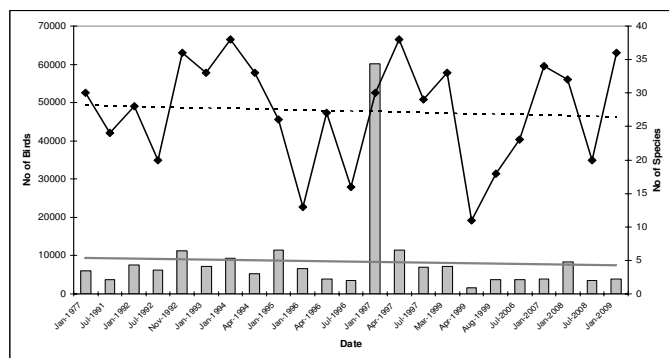


Figure 4: Number of birds (bars, left-hand y-axis) and species (diamonds, right-hand y-axis) counted at the Mile 4 Salt Works and the trend

⁷ These counts are ongoing.

⁸ Excludes Cape Cormorants because they are not always counted.

⁹ Excludes Cape Cormorants because they are not always counted.

over the counting period (dashed line = species trend, solid line = bird numbers trend). The graph excludes Cape Cormorants because they are not always counted.

4.5 Sandwich Harbour



Photo: Eckart Demasius

Sandwich Harbour is one of Namibia's Ramsar sites i.e. a wetland of international importance. The site consists of a small fresh-water wetland in the north, a large bay and tidal mudflats in the south. The northern wetlands have decreased considerably in size over the past 40 years but this does not seem to have affected the numbers and species richness of the site. The southern mudflats hold by far the majority (in terms of numbers) of birds.

Area counted: Approximately 25km²

Number of counts: 58

Last counted on: 19 July 2008¹⁰

Average number of birds: 65850

Average number of species: 40

Maximum number of birds: 317706

Maximum number of species: 52

Species past 1% population level: African Black Oystercatcher (2), Bar-tailed Godwit (2), Black Tern (3), Black-necked Grebe (5), Cape Cormorant (30), Caspian Tern (37), Chestnut-banded Plover (48), Common Tern (18), Curlew Sandpiper (40), Damara Tern (4), Great White Pelican (13), Greater Flamingo (47), Grey Plover (1), Hartlaub's Gull (8), Kelp Gull (26), Lesser Flamingo (30), Little Stint (6), Pied Avocet (17), Ruddy Turnstone (12), Sanderling (35), Sandwich Tern (3), Swift Tern (14), White-breasted Cormorant (18), White-fronted Plover (53).

¹⁰ These counts are ongoing.

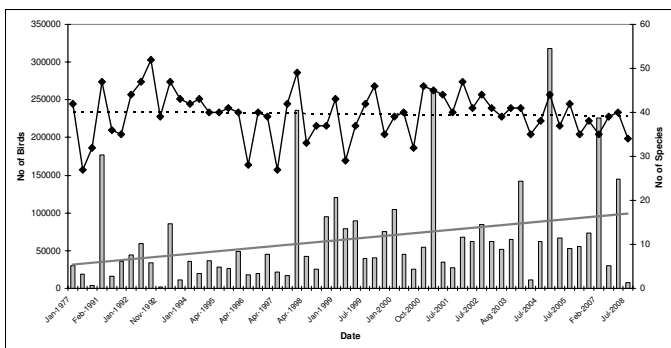


Figure 5: Number of birds (bars, left-hand y-axis) and species (diamonds, right-hand y-axis) counted at Sandwich Harbour and the trend over the counting period (dashed line = species trend, solid line = bird numbers trend).

4.6 Swakop River Mouth



Photo: Eckart Demasius

The Swakop River forms a small, reed fringed oasis where it flows into the sea just to the south of Swakopmund. Although prone to disturbance, it is still a good birding locality.

Area counted: Unknown.

Number of counts: 69

Last counted on: 16 December 2008¹¹

Average number of birds: 234

Average number of species: 17

Maximum number of birds: 1524

Maximum number of species: 32

Species past 1% population level: Hartlaub's Gull (5).

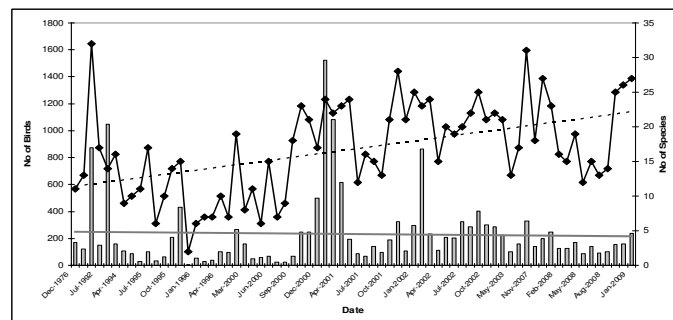


Figure 6: Number of birds (bars, left-hand y-axis) and species (diamonds, right-hand y-axis) counted at the Swakop River Mouth and the trend over the counting period (dashed line = species trend, solid line = bird numbers trend).

4.7 Ugab River Mouth

The Ugab river forms the southern boundary of the Skeleton Coast Park and a small wetland sometimes forms at its mouth.

Area counted: Unknown.

Number of counts: 10

Last counted on: 12 April 1996

Average number of birds: 67

Average number of species: 8

Maximum number of birds: 197

Maximum number of species: 21

Species past 1% population level: None.

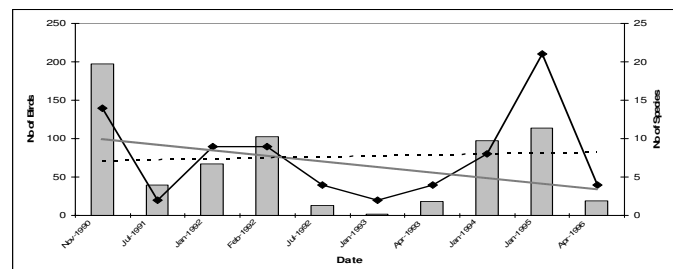


Figure 7: Number of birds (bars, left-hand y-axis) and species (diamonds, right-hand y-axis) counted at the Ugab River Mouth and the trend over the counting period (dashed line = species trend, solid line = bird numbers trend).

¹¹ These counts are ongoing.

4.8 Walvis Bay



Photo: Eckart Demasius

The Walvis Bay wetlands consist of the bay and lagoon, the Pelican Point sandspit and the artificially flooded ponds of the salt works. The area is easily accessible and is therefore a popular destination for tourists and birders. The wetlands are also a Ramsar site.

Area counted: Approximately 70km²

Number of counts: 44

Last counted on: 19 July 2008¹²

Average number of birds: 91045

Average number of species: 40

Maximum number of birds: 237224

Maximum number of species: 54

Species past 1% population level: African Black Oystercatcher (33), Bank Cormorant (1), Black Tern (2), Black-necked Grebe (40), Black-winged Stilt (15), Cape Cormorant (15), Cape Teal (6), Caspian Tern (34), Chestnut-banded Plover (41), Common Ringed Plover (1), Common Tern (9), Curlew Sandpiper (31), Damara Tern (8), Great White Pelican (23), Greater Flamingo (42), Grey Plover (13), Hartlaub's Gull (23), Kelp Gull (37), Lesser Flamingo (42), Pied Avocet (40), Ruddy Turnstone (17), Sanderling (24), Sandwich Tern (1), Swift Tern (21), White-breasted Cormorant (25), White-fronted Plover (41).

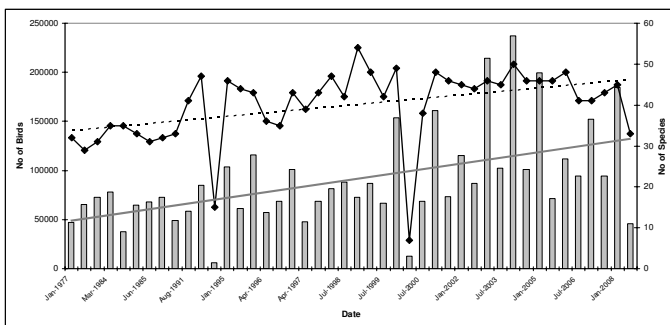


Figure 8: Number of birds (bars, left-hand y-axis) and species (diamonds, right-hand y-axis)

¹² These counts are ongoing.

counted at Walvis Bay and the trend over the counting period (dashed line = species trend, solid line = bird numbers trend).

Breaking News: Greater Sand Plover in Swakopmund

Eckart Demasius

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On Tuesday 4 January 2011 I received a call from Mark Boorman telling me of a Greater Sand Plover that he had located at the Mile 4 Saltworks. I searched for the bird twice a day but to no avail.

Photo: Shaun Overmeyer

On Saturday afternoon when I was about to leave the Saltworks Mark arrived with a couple of birders, amongst them Shaun Overmeyer who was at the time taking care of the sa-



rarebirdnews site during the absence of Trevor Hardaker. I arranged with them to call me should they be so lucky as to see the bird.

I could not believe my luck when my phone rang and they told me that the bird was sitting literally in front of their car. I was out in a flash but in the meantime a territorial White-fronted Plover chased off this rare bird and it moved to a little island in one of the evaporation ponds.



Photo: Eckart Demasius

Wetlands Bird Counts in Namibia 4: Coastal Wetlands 4.1 Cape Cross

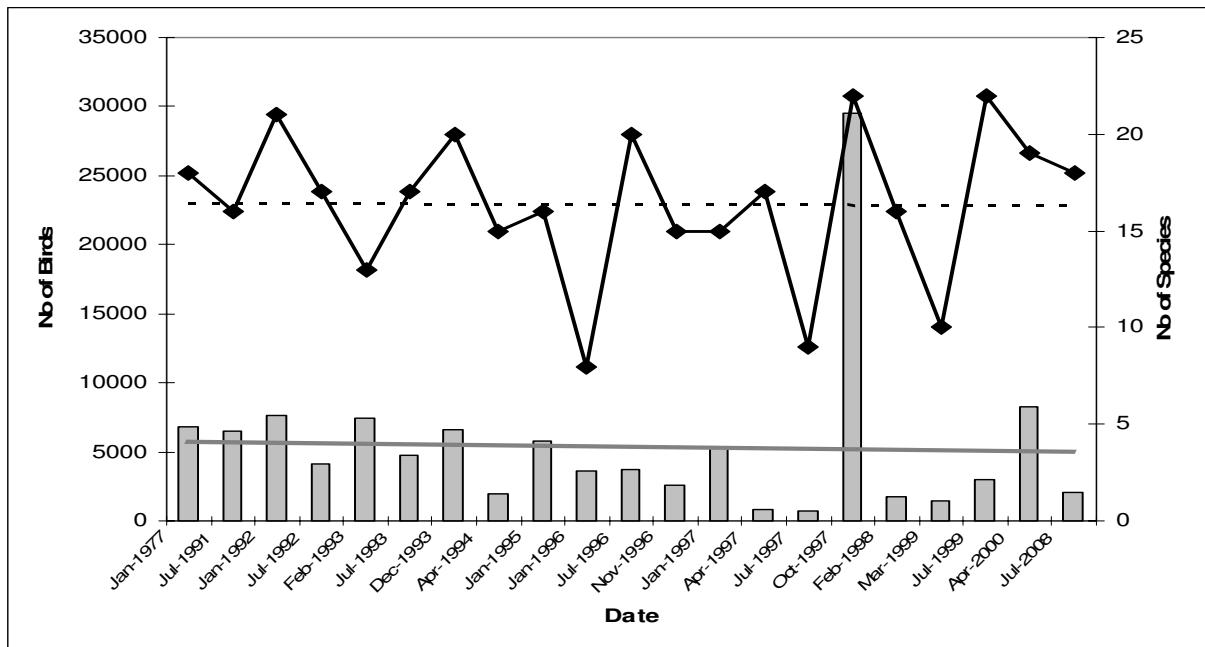


Figure 1: Number of birds (bars, left-hand y-axis) and species (diamonds, right-hand y-axis) counted at Cape Cross and the trend over the counting period (dashed line = species trend, solid line = bird numbers trend). Cape Cormorants have been excluded from this graph because they were not always counted.

2 Kunene River Mouth

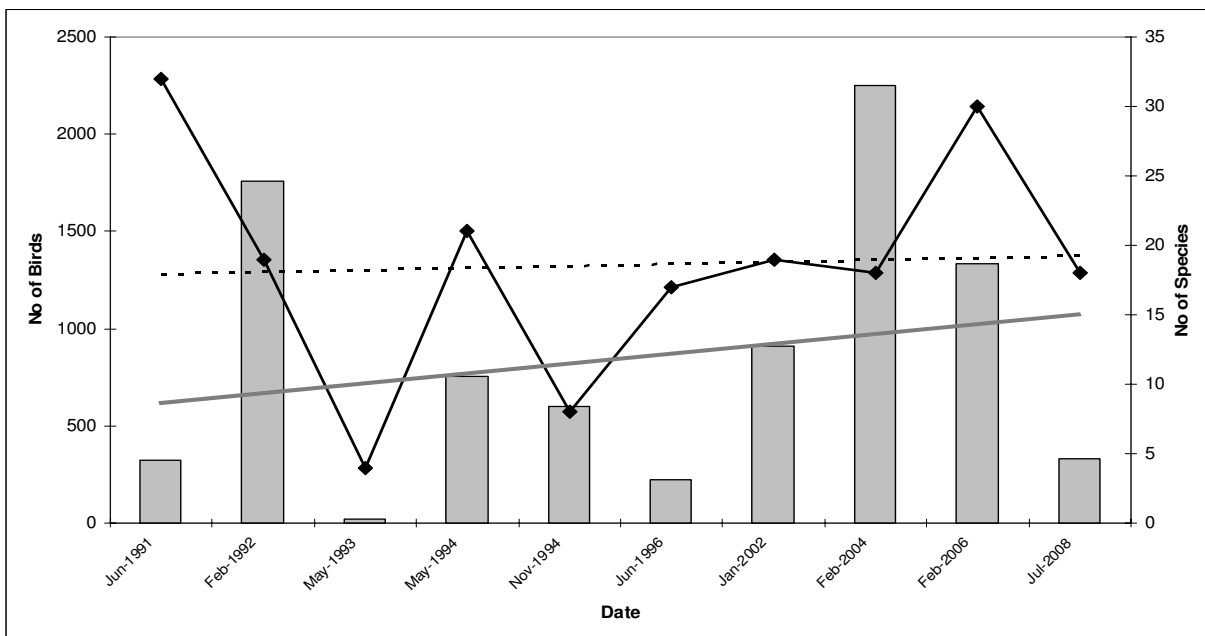


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4.3 Lüderitz Peninsula

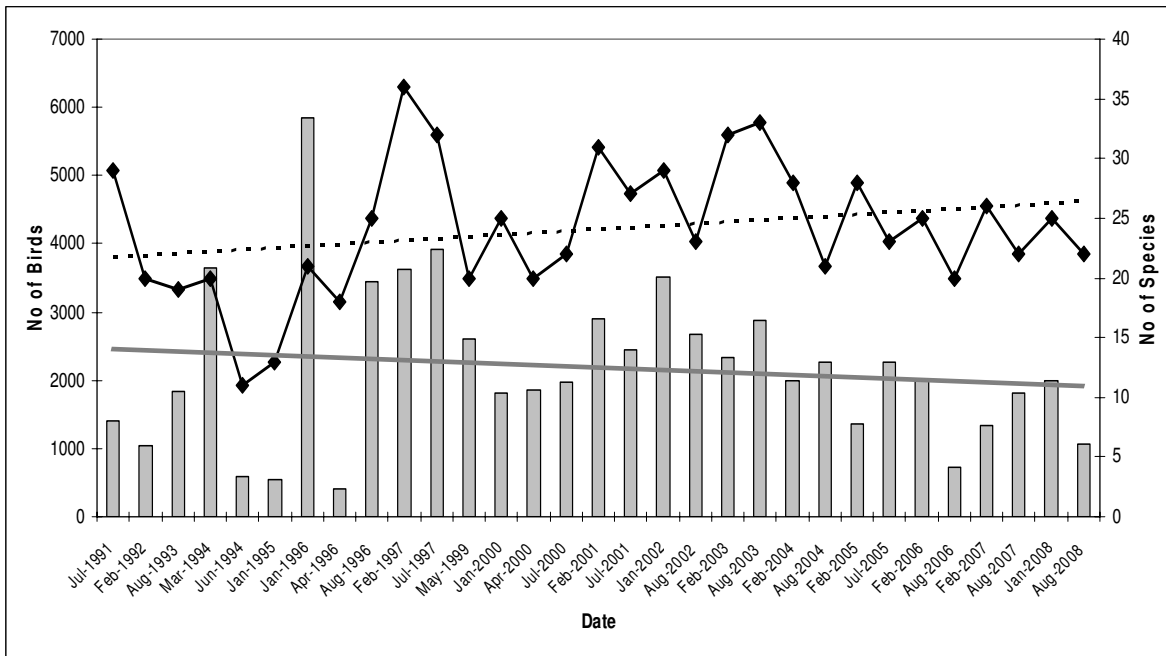


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4.4 Mile 4 Saltworks

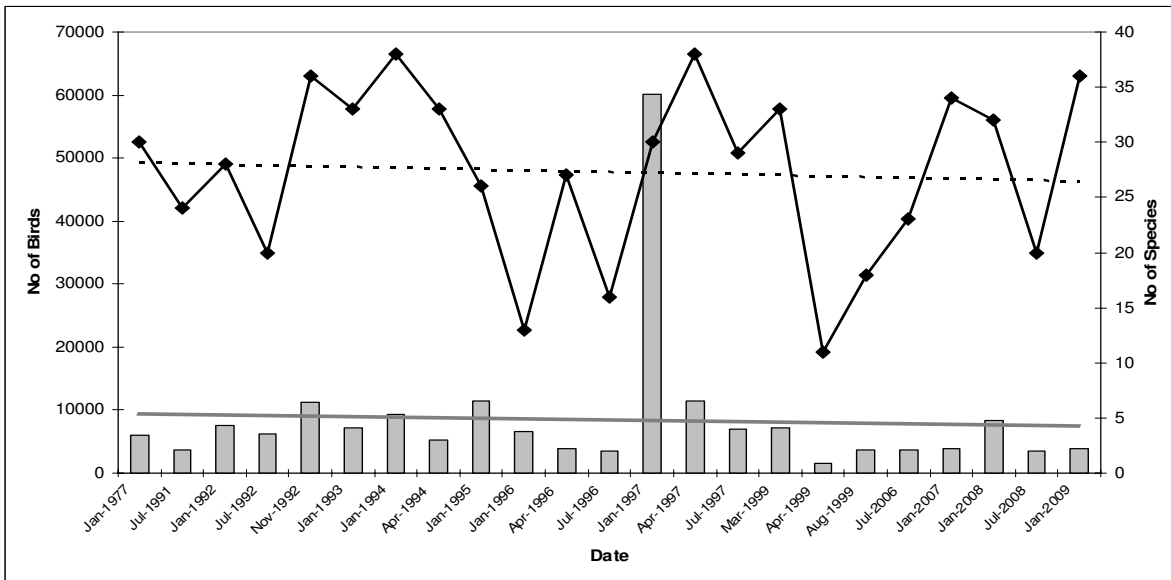


Figure 4: Number of birds (bars, left-hand y-axis) and species (diamonds, right-hand y-axis) counted at the Mile 4 Salt Works and the trend over the counting period (dashed line = species trend, solid line = bird numbers trend). The graph excludes Cape Cormorants because they are not always counted.

4.5 Sandwich Harbour

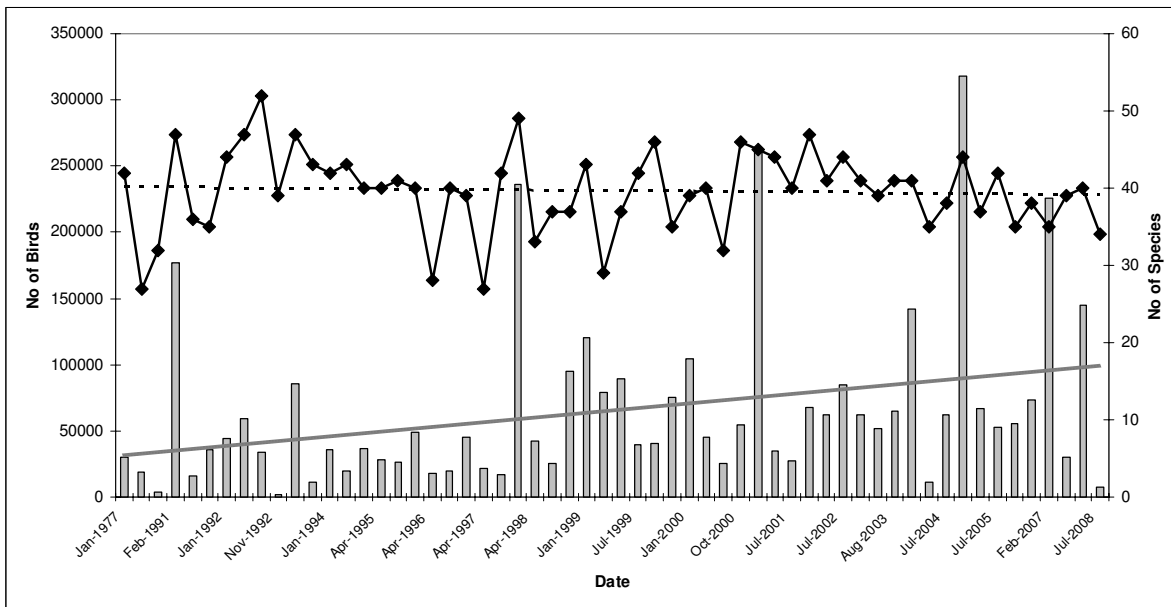


Figure 5: Number of birds (bars, left-hand y-axis) and species (diamonds, right-hand y-axis) counted at Sandwich Harbour and the trend over the counting period (dashed line = species trend, solid line = bird numbers trend).

4.6 Swakop River Mouth

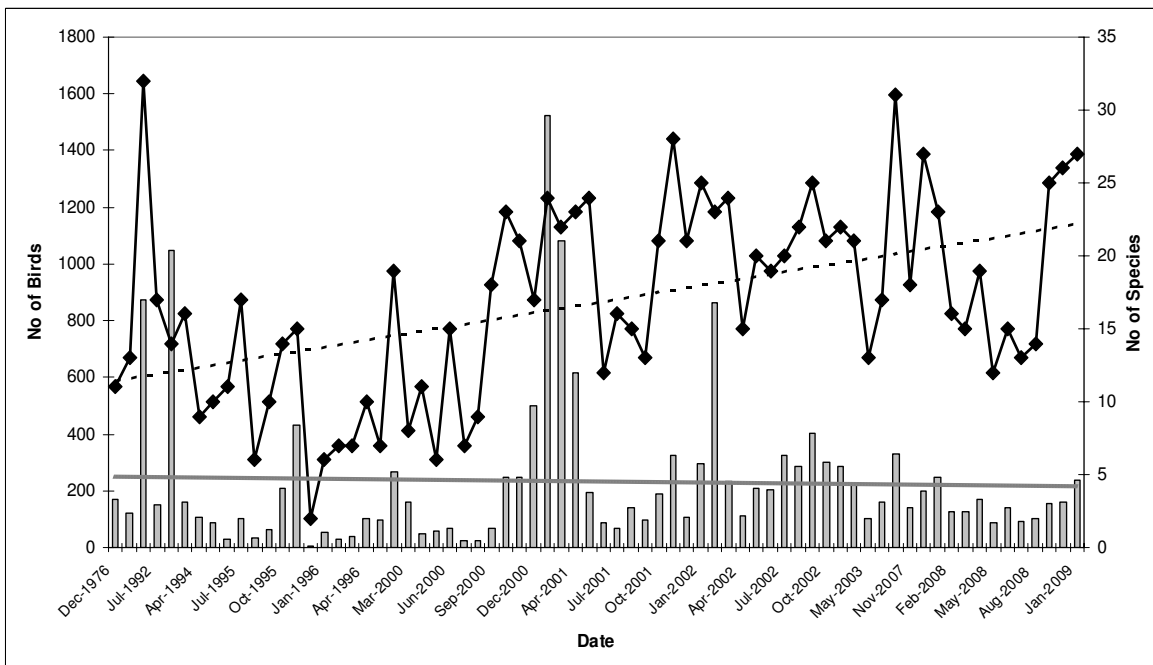


Figure 6: Number of birds (bars, left-hand y-axis) and species (diamonds, right-hand y-axis) counted at the Swakop River Mouth and the trend over the counting period (dashed line = species trend, solid line = bird numbers trend).

4.7 Ugab River Mouth

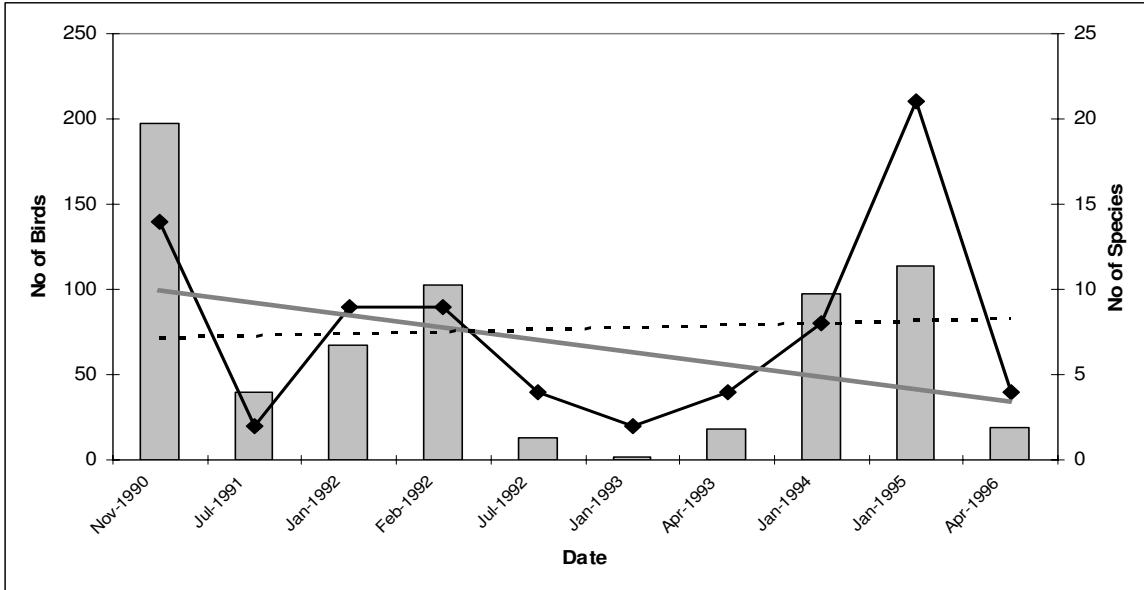


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4.8 Walvis Bay

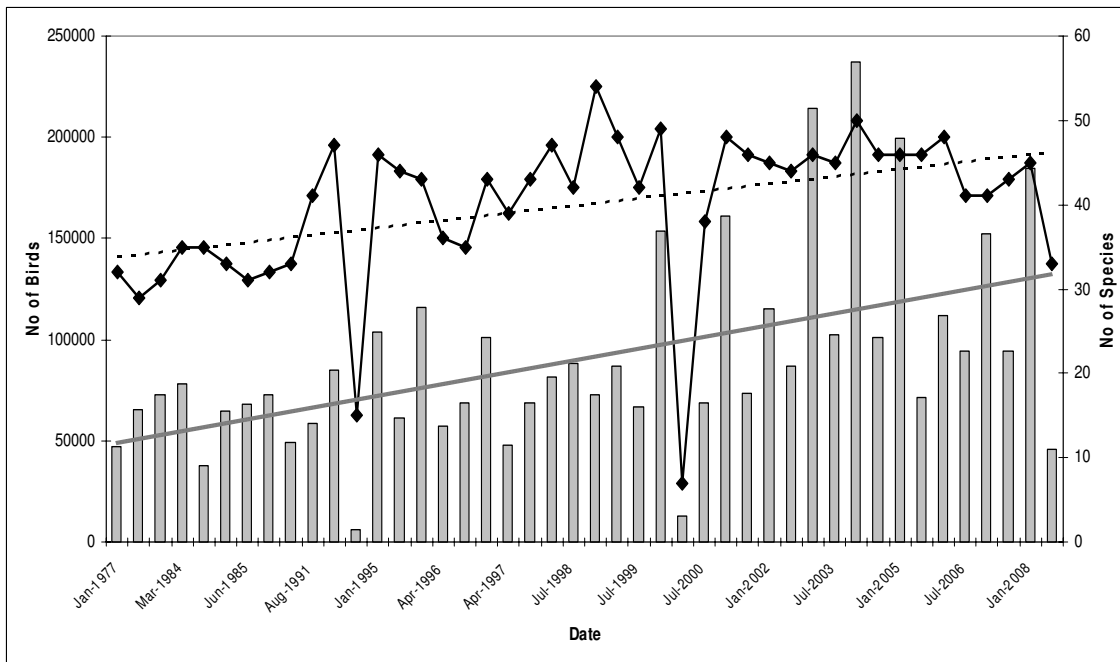


Figure 8: Number of birds (bars, left-hand y-axis) and species (diamonds, right-hand y-axis) counted at Walvis Bay and the trend over the counting period (dashed line = species trend, solid line = bird numbers trend).

Trends in Namibian Waterbird Populations 3: Cormorants and Darter

White-breasted Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax lucidus*)¹⁵

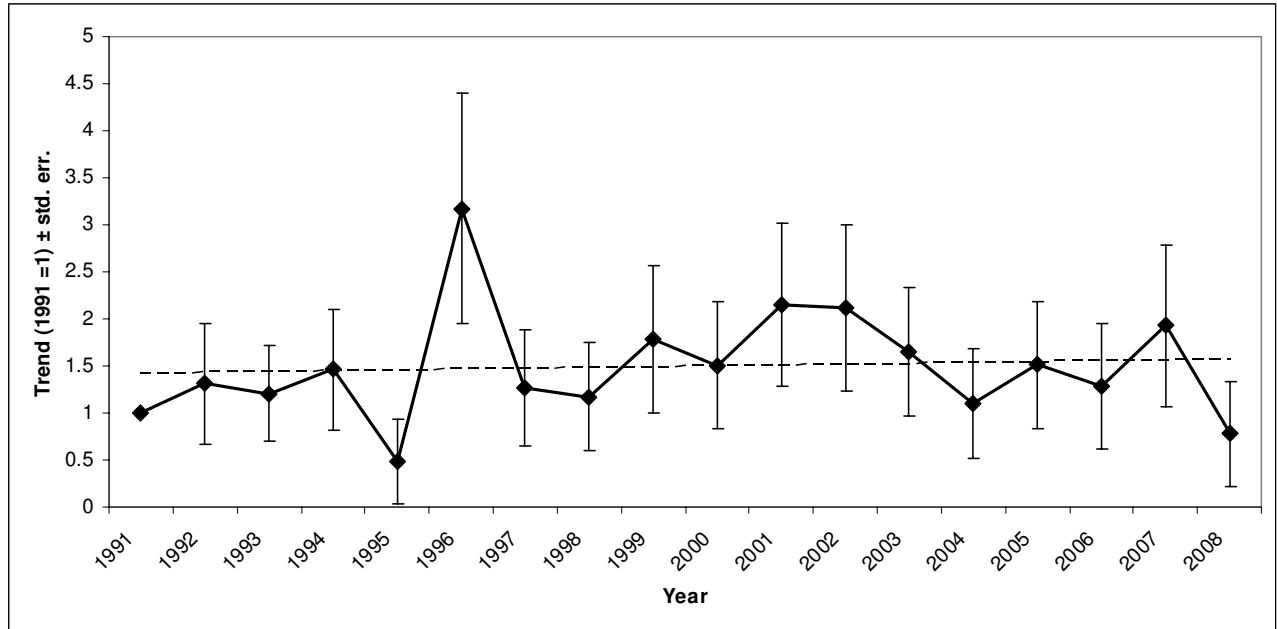


Figure 1: Trend of White-breasted Cormorant population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

Reed Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax africanus*)

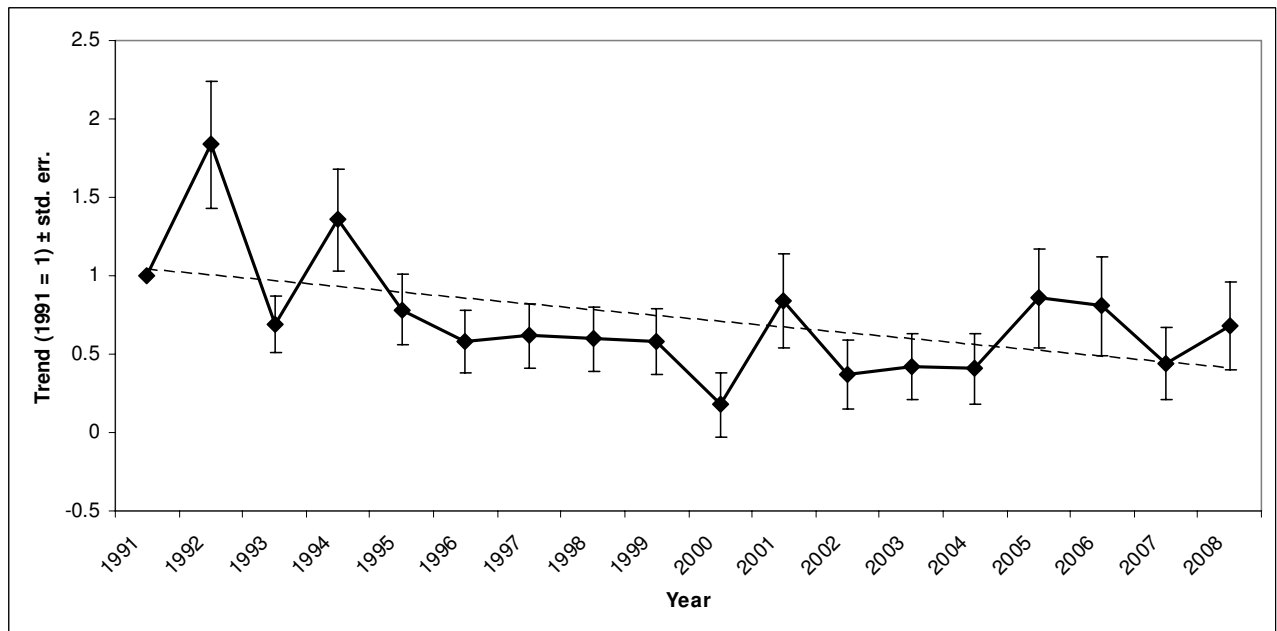


Figure 2: Trend of Reed Cormorant population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.

¹⁵ Names follow Hockey, P.A.R., Dean, W.R.J. and Ryan, P.G. (eds) 2005. *Roberts – Birds of Southern Africa, VIIth Edition*. The Trustees of the John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, Cape Town, South Africa.

African Darter (*Anhinga rufa*)

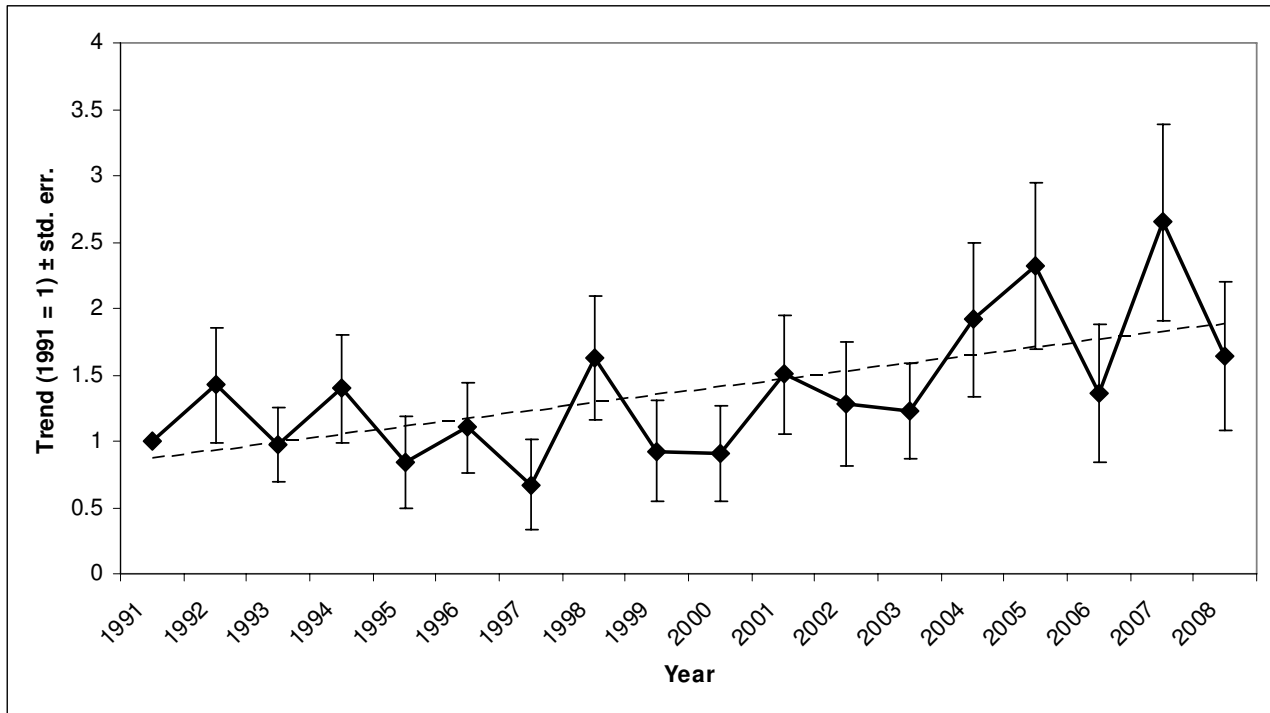


Figure 3: Trend of African Darter population in Namibia from 1991 to 2008.