

Namibia Coastal/Marine Bird News

Newsletter of the Namibia Coastal/Marine Bird Working Group

1: May 2008

Welcome to the first newsletter of the Namibia Coastal/Marine Bird Working Group, which focuses on our new Coastal/Marine Bird Action Plan. Why do we need this action plan?

Namibia's Red Data birds

Excluding vagrant species, 676 bird species are currently known to occur within Namibia. Of these, 60 species (9%) are recognised as being under threat in Namibia's new Red Data Book (Simmons & Brown 2006), which is going into press in 2008. This milestone publication evaluates all our bird species against a set of IUCN criteria, to determine whether they warrant special attention.

The birds under threat form four major groups:

- Inland wetland birds (19 species [32%; plus 3 raptor species = 37%])
- Birds of prey, especially scavenging birds (18 species [30%])
- Peripheral birds of the northern river systems that live in riparian, tropical habitats (8 species [13%])
- Coastal and marine birds (15 species [25%; plus 5 coastal wetland species = 33%])

The main threats to these species include habitat loss/degradation; oil and other forms of pollution; over fishing, particularly of pilchards; by-catch in fishing operations; and a lack of environmental awareness and local ownership of biodiversity resources.



Worldwide, one albatross is killed every five minutes in fishing operations; the Wandering Albatross (above) is classified as Vulnerable (photo Meidad Goren)



The Endangered African Penguin could face extinction by the end of this century (photo Jessica Kemper)

Twenty coastal/marine bird species are of special concern in Namibia

*Namibian Red Data Status according to Simmons & Brown 2006;

G = global conservation status (in brackets) according to BirdLife International 2004

Species	Conservation status*	Species	Conservation status*
Albatross		Gannet Cape	Endangered (G Vulnerable)
Atlantic Yellow-nosed	Endangered	Grebe Black-necked	Near Threatened
Black-browed	Endangered	Gull Hartlaub's	Vulnerable
Shy	Near Threatened	Oystercatcher	Near Threatened (G Near Threatened)
Wandering	Vulnerable	African Black	
Cormorant		Pelican Great White	Vulnerable
Bank	Endangered (G Vulnerable)	Penguin African	Endangered (G Vulnerable)
Cape	Near Threatened (G Near Threatened)	Petrel	
Crowned	Near Threatened (G Near Threatened)	Northern Giant-White-chinned	Near Threatened
Flamingo		Plover Chestnut-banded	Near Threatened
Greater	Vulnerable	Tern	
Lesser	Vulnerable (G Near Threatened)	Caspian	Vulnerable
		Damara	Near Threatened; breeding endemic

The Namibia Coastal/Marine Bird Action Plan is supported by Namibia Nature Foundation and the NACOMA Project
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The Damara Tern (Near Threatened) is a breeding endemic in Namibia (photo: Justine Braby)

Action plans for groups of birds under threat in Namibia

Threats to cranes and other wetland birds in Namibia are being addressed by the Namibia Crane Action Plan, developed in May 2004 and implemented by the Namibia Crane Working Group in association with the Wetland Working Group of Namibia. Threats to raptors are likewise the focus of a Birds of Prey Action Plan and working group, Raptors Namibia, developed in March 2005. These plans/working groups are initiatives of and supported by Namibia Nature Foundation. The fourth, small group of peripheral birds is largely dependent on riparian forests, and work is ongoing with the Directorate of Forestry to protect this habitat.

The key activities of the above working groups are to develop bird-related conservation partnerships, and to develop and implement action plans/strategies and biodiversity management programmes. This is done in consultation with local communities. The action plans form a basis for reporting back, measuring progress and deciding together on future actions. A special focus of these plans is to support both those institutions with a mandate to conserve birds, and civil society conservation groups.

With a view to addressing threats to the third Red Data group, namely coastal and marine birds (including offshore islands), a small, focused workshop was held at Swakopmund on 1 April 2008 in order to build upon and support existing conservation initiatives, and to develop an action plan incorporating the entire coastline of Namibia. The aims of the workshop were to:

- Promote communication and cooperation among coastal/marine bird conservation stakeholders in Namibia;
- Develop a practical conservation action plan for coastal/marine birds; and
- Start implementation of the plan by means of establishing a coastal/marine bird working group.

During 2009 (Year II), a follow-up workshop (or two smaller workshops) will be held to report back on and assess progress, and do further planning.

Workshop findings

The workshop highlighted a number of important conservation facts, including:

- Worldwide, one albatross is killed every five minutes as bycatch in fishing operations. This amounts to 100 000 birds per year (amongst mortalities of other bird species). Of the world's 22 albatross species, 19 are in danger of extinction. Mitigation methods are highly effective when used correctly, in conservation partnerships.
- Numbers of African Penguins are decreasing at an alarming rate of 3.3% per year. This is due to a lack of good fish in the sea for food, poor quality nesting habitat, oilspills and other factors. If there is no change, the species could face extinction by the end of the century.

We hope to bring you the abstracts of the workshop presentations in future issues. In the mean time, please contact us if you would like an electronic copy of the workshop proceedings.

Programme partners

The coastal/marine bird action plan is being developed in partnership with the Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF). The initial and follow-up workshops are being funded and supported by the NACOMA Project. During 2008-2009, (limited) additional funding for some of the projects has been procured from the GEF Small Grants Programme. Further partners include:

- Institutions with a mandate to conserve birds (e.g. Ministry of Environment & Tourism [MET], Ministry of Fisheries & Marine Resources [MFMR] and local municipalities) and
- Other civil society groups (e.g. the Coastal Environmental Trust of Namibia [CETN], the BirdLife International Albatross Task Force [ATF], Namibia Bird Club [NBC], Namibian Environment & Wildlife Society [NEWS], Wetland Working Group [WWG]); and many individuals in private capacity.

Acknowledgements

Workshop participants and other interested parties are thanked for their enthusiastic inputs into this plan, and the presenters for their stimulating contributions. A special thank you to Namibia Nature Foundation for support in initiating the action plan, and in particular to Dr Chris Brown for facilitating the workshop; NACOMA Project for financial and other support for the initial and follow-up workshops; GEF Small Grants Programme for co-funding various projects; to all the other organizations mentioned above; and to the many other individuals who have supported this initiative in various ways.



Some of the founder members of the Namibia Coastal/Marine Bird Working Group enjoy the birds at the new Walvis Bay Sewage Works on 2 April 2008 (photo Ann Scott)

THE NAMIBIA COASTAL/MARINE BIRD ACTION PLAN

Mission

To conserve Namibia's coastal and marine birds and their habitats, in partnership with the people who share these environments.

Priority issues

1. Poor communication (local, national, regional and international)
2. Lack of information, incomplete data sets
3. Poor awareness/education; ignorance, apathy; negative attitudes, old mind-sets, tunnel vision
4. Habitat loss due to human disturbance and to unsustainable tourism, recreation, development and mining; unsustainable guano harvesting on islands in the past
5. Inadequate legislation/ regulations and/or inadequate enforcement (e.g. National Oil Spill Contingency Plan, Marine Litter regulations; housing developments/mining being approved in sensitive areas without proper EIAs)
6. Lack of food availability for birds, in part due to overfishing or to poor resource management
7. Seabird bycatch by different fisheries; lack of implementation of mitigation measures
8. Lack of/inadequate protocols at local level e.g. for addressing oil spills and seabird rescue/ rehabilitation
9. Lack of funding/sustainability for conservation initiatives

Actions

1. Promote communication and cooperation

- 1.1 Establish a Namibia Coastal/Marine Bird Working Group
- 1.2 Promote internal and external networking, information sharing, communication and cooperation in the actions below, using existing channels where possible and incorporating coastal and marine bird habitats and relevant associated biota
- 1.3 Produce and disseminate a newsletter
- 1.4 Develop and maintain a website
- 1.5 Promote good media relations and support
- 1.6 Participate in relevant international meetings/fora
 - Assess pros and cons of belonging to AEWA

2. Obtain/manage information

- 2.1 Investigate and monitor bird populations: numbers, distribution, breeding success (co-ordinate with neighbouring countries)



The Greater Flamingo (Vulnerable) is a flagship for the Walvis Bay Ramsar Site (photo Keith Wearne)

- Conduct coordinated wetland and coastal bird counts 2x year; northern section of Walvis Bay - Swakopmund coast needs attention
- Sandwich Harbour: conduct a sample vs. complete count
- Continue to fine-tune monitoring of marine/ island birds
- Investigate environmental data being collected by Chamber of Mines

2.2 Assess/determine needs for further information

- Damara Tern survey
- Investigate Oystercatcher Project
- Collect information on cormorants along length of coast

2.3 Collate/manage information, analyse data and provide feedback

3. Promote conservation awareness/education

3.1 Target relevant audiences, working through existing initiatives where possible

- Promote media support
- Schools, Polytechnic, UNAM
- Target teachers, train the trainers
- Local and national government institutions (e.g. MET/MFMR, municipalities)
- Decision makers, planners, politicians
- NGOs, bird/nature clubs, youth groups
- Tour operators, guides and tourists, recreationists
- Fishing industry

3.2 Produce and disseminate awareness/education materials and promote/facilitate conservation awareness activities, working through existing initiatives where possible

- Actively involve public in the action plan
- Newsletter, website, radio programmes, flyers/brochures, popular and technical reports, posters
- Talks and outings for schools; competitions; school nature clubs
- Build up libraries at schools, e.g. distribution of Roberts' Bird DVD, bird guide books

4. Manage coastal/marine bird populations and habitats by addressing threats

- 4.1 Develop and implement species and/or area-based action plans in consultation with local communities by:
- promoting awareness of conservation issues;
 - agreeing on priorities and process at a meeting;
 - implementing and supporting actions
- 4.2 Promote conservation buy-in by decision makers, planners, politicians
- Make good information on coastal and marine bird conservation aspects available for developing practical conservation measures
 - Promote the economic value of birds and their habitats e.g. in terms of tourism
- 4.3 Promote the enforcement of regulations
- Continue to lobby for conducting EIAs, and for implementing recommended mitigation measures
 - Actively support the development of environmental management plans (including zoning of activities)
- 4.4 Implement an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF) protocol in resource management plans (*bring back the pelagics!*)

5. Update the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (NOSCP)

- 5.1 Investigate/assess the existing plan [Jessica]
- Does it need updating? (case studies)
 - NNF to take up with OPM, make recommendations on responsibilities and rehabilitation
 - Determine accountability for mystery spills ("The polluter pays")
 - Determine who is responsible for removing oil
- 5.2 Promote awareness and publicise details of the plan

6. Reduce seabird bycatch

- 6.1 Investigate seabird abundance/ density/ distribution
- 6.2 Determine to what extent the National Plan of Action (NPOA) is being adopted (in terms of the bycatch rate of birds/1000 hooks)
- 6.3 Promote the involvement of industry/government in the project
- Facilitators: Albatross Task Force
 - Fisheries Observation Agency (FOA)
 - Inspectors
 - Owners/skippers/crews?
- 6.4 Promote education/public awareness
- 6.5 Wield constitution

- 6.6 Check bycatch legislation and summarize it (pamphlet)
- Only commercial species?
 - Birds included?

- 6.7 Include bycatch mitigation in legislation
- Dumping legislation? (carcasses?)
 - How are boats set up? – BCLME

- 6.8 Address observer issues for data collection
- Training/workshops/courses
 - Payment for "extra" work?
 - Space on vessels (FOA)

- 6.9 Develop a steering committee on bycatch (ICAT)
- Engage with industry
 - Promote "buy-in" by promoting observers as data collectors, not law-enforcers
 - Sound out industry on how to tackle ATF

7. Develop a seabird rescue/rehabilitation protocol

- 7.1 Publicise central contact points for seabird rescue through:
- newspapers (Namib Times);
 - signs (e.g. airport); and
 - fishing permits
- 7.2 Promote public awareness of protocol, e.g. to avoid chasing birds unnecessarily (to go with fishing permits)

8. Promote project sustainability

- 5.1 Work through existing channels and initiatives wherever possible
- 5.2 Promote training and skills development through existing organizations/initiatives
- Polytechnic, UNAM
 - Nam Bird Club, NamRingers
- 5.3 Determine needs and targets for further capacity building, e.g.
- General public, especially youth and volunteers
 - Government institutions
- 5.4 Compile and submit funding proposals



Regular counts are essential for monitoring coastal and marine birds (*photo Ann Scott*)

JULY 2008 COASTAL BIRD COUNTS

Keith Wearne, Coastal Environmental Trust of Namibia (CETN); email cetn@iafrica.com.na

The next bird count will take place on the weekend of 19th-20th July 2008. This will be extended to Monday 21st for some of the areas, due to the large number of sizeable areas we have to cover with only a few knowledgeable birders. Below is the planning to date.

Sandwich Harbour (19th & 20th)

Walvis Bay Ramsar Site (19th & 20th)

(If enough counters are available, the coast and the new Walvis Sewage ponds will be counted on the same days)

Cape Cross lagoon (21st)

Swakop River Mouth (21st)

Mile 4 Salt Pans (20th or 21st)

Lüderitz (19th & 20th) - flamingos

This will not be a large count in the matter of bird numbers as the majority of Palaeartics will not be with us, but it will be important in knowing the total number of Flamingos in Southern Africa, in particular the number of Lessers. Any of this year's juveniles MUST be counted separately please. The flamingos will also be counted in other areas, including Sua Pan and Etosha, as part of a coordinated regional count.

Please contact me for further information, or if you would like to participate in the counts.

SUMMARY OF THE SUMMER 2008 WETLAND BIRD COUNTS

Holger Kolberg, Survey Unit, Directorate Scientific Services, Ministry of Environment & Tourism (DSS, MET)
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Namibia was blessed with exceptional rainfall for the 2007/08 season and this definitely had an effect on the summer wetland bird counts. Not only were numbers lower at many of the smaller sites, probably because birds had spread to the plethora of available water elsewhere, but some counters could not reach their sites due to muddy conditions. Nevertheless seventeen sites were counted with a total of 403 515 birds of 75 species. The bulk of this total was counted at two sites, Sandwich Harbour and Walvis Bay. In fact, this is the first time that these two sites were counted on the same weekend, allowing for comparisons and more rigid population estimates.

The data on hand shows that twenty species surpassed the one percent global population level at Walvis Bay and ten species did the same at Sandwich Harbour. Between these two sites 76% of the global population of Greater Flamingos and 65% of the global population of Lesser Flamingos was counted. Other species found in significant numbers in terms of their global population are Cape Cormorant, White-fronted Plover and Chestnut-banded Plover. In fact, the number of Chestnut-banded Plovers counted was larger than the currently published population estimate!

The figures show that both Walvis Bay and Sandwich Harbour held approximately the same number of birds, but the composition of the various groups differs tremendously in many cases.

My thanks are due to the many counters that continue to contribute to this programme, it is very much appreciated.

<i>Name of Site</i>	<i>Date (2008)</i>	<i>No. birds</i>	<i>No. spp.</i>
Aeroplane Bay	24 Jan	45	7
Agate Beach	24 Jan	23	6
Griffith Bay	24 Jan	78	15
Große Bucht	24 Jan	294	7
Guano Bay	24 Jan	301	11
Hardap Dam	06 Feb	1748	25
Lüderitz Sewage Works	24 Jan	1065	8
Mile 4 Salt Works	22 Jan	8341	33
Naute Dam	04 Feb	2016	28
Radford Bay	24 Jan	59	10
Sandwich Harbour	19 Jan	194 805	41
Second Lagoon	24 Jan	78	11
Shearwater Bay	24 Jan	53	1
Swakop River Mouth	15 Jan	250	23
Walvis Bay	19 Jan	190 188	44
Walvis Bay Sewage Ponds	19 Feb	4171	33
Total		403 515	75

MAIN SPECIES COUNTS FOR THE TWO MAIN SITES

SH = Sandwich Harbour;
WB = Walvis Bay

	SH	WB
Grebes	101	821
Pelicans	54	438
Cormorants and darter	50 122	5 588
Hérons & egrets	53	148
Storks	0	0
Ibises & spoonbills	1	0
Hamerkop & shoebill	0	0
Flamingos	35 779	60 998
Cranes	0	0
Geese & ducks	278	2 563
Rails, gallinules & coots	9	0
Finfoot & jacana	0	0
Waders/shorebirds	55 984	53 285
Gulls, terns & skimmer	52 424	66 318
Birds of prey	0	0
Additional species		29
TOTAL NO.	194 805	190188
SPECIES	41	44

RAPTOR AND CRANE/WETLAND BIRD NEWSLETTERS

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