

BIRD RINGING IN NAMIBIA

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HISTORY

Bird ringing started in Namibia in 1964/65 when two German ornithologists visited Windhoek to train members of the Ornithological Working Group of the Scientific Society. Before this time a few people from Germany and South Africa had done some ringing in Namibia, but on a small scale; no information is available on who they were and what species they ringed.

Between the mid-1960s and the mid-1970s, all ringing in Namibia was carried out by members of the Scientific Society under the leadership of H.K.F. Kolberg, H.H. Stock and D. Ludwig.

In addition to general mistnetting, the group ringed a number of nestling Cape Vultures at Waterberg (this stopped after one of the ringers fell to his death on the cliff) and every year a trip was made to ring nestling Whitebacked Vultures on farms belonging to the Diekmann's in the Otjiwarongo district. In addition, a number of trips were made to active Chestnut Weaver nests and some 400 birds were ringed.

In the early 1970s ornithologists in the Directorate of Nature Conservation also started a number of ringing projects, mostly confined to species specific studies.

H.H. Berry colour-ringed a few hundred Cape Cormorants and smaller numbers of Crowned Cormorants and White Pelicans. C.F. Clinging started ringing coastal waders and terns, and nestling Lappetfaced Vultures in the Namib Desert. H. Ebedes marked a few hundred vultures in the Etosha National Park, as part of a study on the vectors of the anthrax disease. In the late 1970s H.C. Biggs started trapping raptors using a Bal-chatri trap, for ringing and measuring, and the Department of Sea Fisheries in the Cape started a ringing programme on seabirds breeding on islands off the southern African coast.

Between the mid-1960s and 1980 it is estimated that at least 6 000 birds were ringed in Namibia (excluding the islands). It is only after 1980 that reliable information is available from the SAFRING data base, and the following overview is based on print-outs provided by SAFRING for the 10 year period July 1980 to June 1990.

RINGERS

Twentytwo ringers were registered for Namibia and the Walvis Bay enclave between 1980 and 1990. Those with over 200 birds ringed are listed in Table 1 together with the number of species and birds handled. However, these names and figures hide a host of dedicated ringers and ringing activity. For example, a number of ringers operated under my name, e.g. T. Archibald, T. Cooper, B. Kruger, L. Le Roux, M. Loots, J. Paterson, M. Paxton, R. Vinjevold, J. Webster, most of whom ringed over 200 birds; they just preferred me to fill in the ringing schedules! Similarly, "staff of the Skeleton Coast Park" covers a number of active ringers, most notable being R. Braby and S. Braine, as does "D. Ludwig" who completes returns on behalf of the Namibian Bird Club ringing group. In total, about 40 ringers were active in Namibia over the past decade, a marked increase on previous numbers.

TABLE 1

PEOPLE WHO HAVE RINGED MORE THAN 200 BIRDS IN NAMIBIA BETWEEN
1980 AND 1990

NAME	NO. SPECIES	NO. BIRDS
Staff, Skeleton Coast P.	111	2 928
Ludwig, D.	98	2 658
Brown, C.	87	1 305
Bridgefords, P.	40	695
Hines, C.	98	678
Komen, J.	112	642
Stutterheim, C.	55	480
Malan, F.	27	446
Boyer, H.	25	375
Braine, S.	82	291
Yates, M.	42	265
Kolberg, H.	15	207

BIRDS RINGED

A total of 11 620 birds of 308 species were ringed in Namibia from 1980 to 1990, comprising 900 nestlings and 10 720 fledged birds. The 20 most common species ringed are listed in Table 2.

The large number of European Swallows ringed resulted from two visits by German ornithologists attempting to recover birds ringed in Germany, and at the same time ring birds trapped here for possible recovery back home. The large number of Larklike Buntings trapped were part of the Skeleton Coast Park staff ringing effort, mainly a blitz by J. Paterson, attempting to determine where these irruptive birds come from and go to. Unfortunately there have been no returns on Larklike Buntings to date.

There are a number of schedules outstanding from a few ringers (myself included!), which would push up the numbers of birds ringed by a few hundred.

TABLE 2

THE 20 MOST COMMON BIRDS RINGED IN NAMIBIA FROM 1980 TO 1990

SPECIES	NO. RINGER	SPECIES	NO. RINGER
European Swallow	1 120	Violeteared Waxbill	213
Larklike Bunting	981	Europ. Sedge Warbler	206
Redeyed Bulbul	617	Rock Kestrel	197
Masked Weaver	541	Namaqua Dove	175
Pale C. Goshawk	475	Greater Kestrel	171
African M. Warbler	425	Curlew Sandpiper	170
Whitefronted Plover	315	Greyheaded Sparrow	168
Greybilled Finchlark	314	Common Waxbill	144
Doubleb. Sandgrouse	240	Whitebacked Vulture	141
Lappetfaced Vulture	237	Cape Sparrow	139

RECOVERIES

This is the most interesting part of ringing. The information on birds marked and/or recovered in Namibia is summarised in Table 3. A total of 217 birds of 44 species have been recovered. While all the ringing data from previous years is not available, an approximate recovery rate for terrestrial birds is about 0,7%. The larger species have higher recovery rates, but small birds are very rarely recovered.

I have printouts of all recoveries in Namibia, giving ringing and recovery locations, dates, distances moved, time elapsed, etc. You are all most welcome to look at the information and put it to a useful purpose.

TABLE 3

RINGING RECOVERIES OF BIRDS RINGED AND/OR RECOVERED IN NAMIBIA FROM 1980 TO 1990

A = number of birds recovered; B = number recovered at site of ringing, i.e. distance travelled is 0; C = mean recovery distance (km, excluding recoveries in B); D = maximum recovery distance; E = mean recovery time (months); F = maximum recovery time (months).

Species	A No.	B No.	C Km	D Km	E Mo.	F Mo.
Jackass Penguin	17	5	666	1476	27	203
European Storm Petrel	1	0		10009		4
Northern Giant Petrel	1	0		3895		143
White Pelican	3	0	91	203	183	404
Cape Gannet	45	16	883	2355	52	130
Whitebreasted Cormorant	5	4		44	15	28
Cape Cormorant	28	4	853	1595	41	102
Grey Heron	1	0		207		104
South African Shelduck	1	0		690		142
Cape Vulture	2	0	1229	1231	15	15
Whitebacked Vulture	2	0	435	823	58	108
Lappetfaced Vulture	15	0	286	673	41	118
Lanner Falcon	3	0	880	1528	23	57
Greater Kestrel	1	0		314		28
Rock Kestrel	2	0	580	1158	50	97
Lesser Kestrel	1	0		8035		9
Yellowbilled Kite	1	0		2297		7
Blackshouldered Kite	1	0		24		2
Tawny Eagle	4	0	115	235	33	76
African Hawk Eagle	1	0		9		4

TABLE 3 (continued)

RINGING RECOVERIES OF BIRDS RINGED AND/OR RECOVERED IN NAMIBIA
FROM 1980 TO 1990

Species	A No.	B No.	C Km	D Km	E Mo.	F Mo.
Martial Eagle	1	0		130		66
Blackbreasted Snake Eagle	2	0	39	69	39	69
Steppe Buzzard	1	0		5924		45
Little Banded Goshawk	1	0		5		3
Pale Chanting Goshawk	11	5	119	377	39	107
Turnstone	7	0	5503	8057	86	140
Curlew Sandpiper	1	0		7374		29
Knot	1	0		8264		45
Sanderling	2	0	7138	8287	42	65
Subantarctic Skua	2	0	3939	4522	47	52
Kelp Gull	3	1	642	1212	90	251
Common Tern	15	0	8871	9187	67	171
Arctic Tern	3	0	9117	9401	109	268
Sandwich Tern	14	0	8836	9523	52	184
Swift Tern	2	0	902	1286	43	55
Laughing Dove	1	0		299		19
Pearlspotted Owl	1	0		14		21
European Swallow	6	0	8404	8641	8	20
Rock Martin	1	1				54
Redeyed Bulbul	2	1		17	8	12
Mountain Chat	2	2			51	51
Cape Sparrow	1	1				29
Common Waxbill	1	1				29
Shafttailed Whydah	1	1				3

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank all the ringers in Namibia, past and present, for their enthusiastic participation in this project. Whether you have ringed 10 or 1 000 birds in the last year, your involvement is appreciated. I would also like to express the thanks of all ringers in Namibia to SAFRING, and particularly to Terry Oatley, for the efficient and friendly service provided to us all.

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