

**Seen in Damaraland**

Bruno Nebe

I have just returned from a trip through Damaraland and very glad to report having seen three kills in three days.

One the first evening, we were very fortunate to observe two male lions hiding their oryx kill from us. Unfortunately, it was in the Ugab Valley and in thick reeds – so, no chance of vultures picking this up. The next day we came upon a cheetah kill in the Huab River. We had fifteen Lappet-faced Vultures on the kill. None of the birds had rings/tags and two of the birds were juvenile. The next day we had another cheetah kill (two males killed a sub-adult oryx) and a pair of Lappet-faced Vultures on a tree near by.

Driving down the Huab River, I located no less than seven vulture nests. Some had birds on them, others seem to be active as the ground was freshly whitewashed and fresh pellets found. What is the possibility of some of the Lappet-faced Vultures from the traditional southern populations moving up north? In the ten years I have worked in this area, I have not seen so much vulture activity. Interestingly enough, we did not see any White-backed Vultures.

Have you ever heard or recorded a predominantly light, slaty-grey version of a Peregrine Falcon? Unfortunately, I had no camera with me, but we observed a pair of these birds hunting down the river and both of them had very light grey upper colouration with heavy barring on the under parts. The female was quite a bit bigger than the male and both were vocal. Could it be *Falco peregrinus minor*? What puts me off a bit is that they were very light slate grey. Never seen such light coloured birds.

Can anybody give Bruno an answer?

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**From: Namrings website**

Trevor Hardaker

At a recent soccer game between Finland and Belgium played in Helsinki, apparently of prime importance for the European Championships, the game attracted a lot of interest from all sorts. The stadium was packed with supporters and one of the supporters, a Eurasian Eagle Owl, took "field side" seating to a whole new level...

This very important game had to be stopped for about 7 minutes as the Eagle Owl perched on the cross bar of the goal posts for a close up view!! It also flew down the length of the field several times and even tried to "attack" some of the opposition's players.

Can't think of too many other birds that have stopped an international sporting event!!

For those of you that have broadband, you may prefer to see this whole episode in person, so go and take a look at the video here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4dMBFOiYxT0> **Enjoy!**

**Raptors seen near Opuwo**

Coen Karsten

I saw the following raptors at S 18°09'50.3" E014°23'37.4" on the Uukwaluudhi Conservancy, about 60km from Opuwo, Namibia.

Twenty-five White-backed Vultures, one Lappet-faced Vulture, one Cape Vulture, one Tawny Eagle and one Secretary Bird. Photos of Cape Vulture attached.



Photos: Coen Karsten

**Sightings at REST's vulture restaurant**

Maria Diekmann

I was at a conference so the sightings are from my students. They are pretty good at aging, but could be questioned. All patagials were yellow, so I am assuming "K" is Holger Kolberg?

Species	Left	Right	Age
White-backed Vulture	K005	K005	Immature
White-backed Vulture	K124	K124	Immature
White-backed Vulture	K032	K032	Immature
White-backed Vulture	Metal	N020	Adult (this is a plastic ring)

**Replies**

André Botha

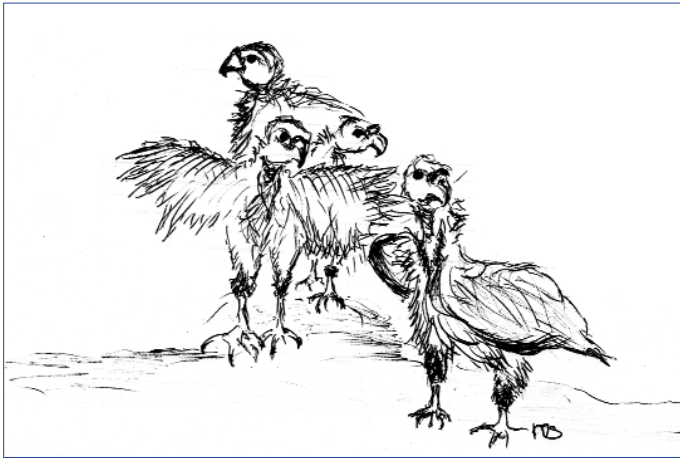
The birds with K-tags are actually Abrie Maritz's from the southern Kalahari and were all tagged in the nest last year in October.

Holger Kolberg

This is amazing and shows the value of the patagials! Ring # N020 is a chick Peter Bridgeford and myself ringed on a farm near Steinhausen (2139S 1814E) on 20 September 2006.

## REST

The **Rare and Endangered Species Trust** is well worth a visit. Make arrangements by e-mailing: [rest@iway.na](mailto:rest@iway.na) or phone +264 (0)67 30 6226. See the birds that are being rehabilitated, visit the vulture restaurant and find out about the work being done there.



Drawing: Manuela Schmidt, Windhoek

## Vultures in the Namib-Naukluft Park

Holger Kolberg

Recently, I had some time to look for tagged vultures and am pleased to report the following sightings:

**17 May 2007** – Thirteen Lappet-faced Vultures at a springbok carcass next to the park fence near the Gembokwater turn-off (22° 56.587' S 15° 37.168' E), one tagged individual, tag no F027, clearly readable by both Claire and myself. F027 was ringed by Marc Dürr on 14/11/2007 at Hotsas, NNP.

**18 May 2007** – Fifty-nine (yes, 59!!) Lappet-faced Vultures and one Cape (?), it was nearly the same size as the Lappet-faced Vultures, else make it an African White-backed Vulture) on a gemsbok carcass next to the Ganab – Hotsas road just past the powerline (23° 03.612' S 15° 27.936' E), two tagged individuals. Unfortunately, these guys were very skittish and we couldn't approach close enough to read the tags, but one of them looked like the individual we had seen the day before.

**18 May 2007** – Three Lappet-faced Vultures and four warthogs on an ostrich carcass just off the main Windhoek – Swakop road near the eastern park boundary (22° 54.495' S 15° 35.058' E), no tags.

**21 May 2007** – Eleven Lappet-faced Vultures at a gemsbok carcass near the Ganab weather station (23° 07.309' S 15° 32.301' E), two tagged individuals. Again, these guys were very skittish and took off before I could get close enough to read the tags but these two looked different to the other tagged ones seen.

Moral of the story? A good spotting scope is an absolute must if you want to read the tags (guess what's on my Christmas list!).

We saw several pairs of Lappet-faced Vultures sitting on trees with nests, so the breeding business is on and we may just have a bumper season, because I think there will be no shortage of food.

## Vultures feeding on bullfrogs

Peter Bridgeford

"Stories abound in Africa of vultures and their feeding habits. Indeed, when most people think of vultures, a food context probably first comes to mind; and this would always involve a large carcass, and usually a disdainful comment thrown in for good measure" (*Vultures of Africa*).

Rolf Ritter of the farm Woltemade in the Hochfeld area, northeast of Windhoek, observed the following interesting incident. On approaching a natural pan on his farm, he saw about a hundred White-backed Vultures in the trees and on the ground. As he usually only saw a few of these birds at a time, he assumed that they had been feeding on a large carcass. When he could not find it, he sent his workers into the surrounding bush to look, but they found no carcass.

The pan was roughly 50m in diameter and held water for three or four months after the rainy season. In addition, the overflow from a nearby reservoir also flowed into the pan. Rolf noticed that the vultures had excessively trampled the area around the pan and their tracks went in and out of the water. He found feathers, down and small pieces of intestine scattered around the pan. He then realised that the vultures had been feeding on the bullfrogs living in the pan. The birds were walking into the shallow water and either catching the live frogs in their talons or in their powerful bills, or else the frogs had died and the vultures were feeding on the carrion.

*Vultures of Africa* records vultures feeding on catfish (barbel), bream, snakes, water leguan and just about everything else, but not on bullfrogs. The giant bullfrog *Pyxicephalus adspersus*, found in this part of Namibia, is from 100-200 mm in length. It can attain a mass of about 700-800 grams, more than a mouthful for a hungry vulture. These frogs breed in shallows of temporary, rain filled depressions and remain buried for most of the year (*Frogs and frogging in Southern Africa*).

## References

*Vultures of Africa*. 1992. P. Mundy, D. Butchart, J. Ledger and S. Piper. Acorn Books and Russel Friedman Books.  
*Frogs and frogging in Southern Africa*. 2001. V. Carruthers. Struik, Cape Town

*Pyxicephalus adspersus*

**from:**  
*Frogs and frogging in Southern Africa*  
**by:**  
 Vincent Carruthers



## Sandveld Conservancy

Vultures Namibia attended the quarterly meeting of the Sandveld Conservancy on 27 June. After the meeting, a slide presentation on the breeding biology and threats faced by vultures in Namibia was given to Conservancy members and the farm workers. The meeting was on the hunting and cattle farm Woltemade of Rolf and Marion Ritter in the Hochfeld area.

Thanks to Monica and Helmut Förtsch of Eureka who invited us to the meeting and provided food and accommodation. Nedbank Namibia provided funds for our transport.



With appreciation and credit to an unknown source

### Curious Owlets

Sue Roux

I thought this a lovely picture. Some people don't know owls can turn their heads almost 360° in any direction.

### Avian gluttony?

Neil Thomson

It is a Saturday afternoon in mid winter and I am with Dirk Heinrich cruising down the Kupferberg road looking for raptors wishing to be adorned with cheap jewellery. We spy a rock kestrel on a telephone pole, but it is busy consuming a prey item. Dirk studies it through his binoculars and guesses that the unfortunate victim is a lizard as he watches a tail slowly disappearing down the bird's throat. The kestrel is probably sated but what the hell – there are no other potential jewellery' customers in the vicinity so let's try the bal-chatri anyway. Sure enough, the little glutton cannot resist the temptation of what appears to be a free meal – he leaves his perch, heads straight for the trap and is ensnared. On processing the bird we find that with full crop, he weighs in at 210g. The centimetre or so of tail still protruding from the bill is hairy, rather than scaly so the recently ingested meal is obviously a rodent. There is no way to identify the species of rodent, but assuming it is a small rodent with a mass of between 10 and 20g this would mean that the prey item consumed constitutes approximately 5 to 10 % of the bird's body weight – and he is still interested in another meal! Let's put that into human terms – I have a mass of about 90kg – this would mean that after devouring a meal of 4,5 to 9kg I would immediately have been seeking another meal! Impossible! The mind boggles (and the stomach churns) at the very thought of it. Obviously, the appetites and metabolisms of raptors are very different from ours.

### News Flashes

► Does anybody know of any sightings of some kind of storks (Saddle-billed Stork?) at Palmwag? On my walk there recently, 2 large birds flew away. Unluckily my binoculars were too small to identify the birds clearly. I also forgot to ask the staff there if they knew anything more. We spotted a Jackal Buzzard on our walk on the Olive Trail, Namib-Naukluft Park and Verreauxs' Eagles were quite common. Hugo Hausmann

► I am working on a paper studying the relationship between the *Aquila verreauxii* nesting success and hyrax abundance. I was reading your webpage on the *Aquila verreauxii* and was interested in three of the references (Wink & Sauer-Gürth 2000, Davies & Ferguson 2000, and Davies & Allan 1997). I have searched for these and have not found anything. Do you know where or how I might be able to access these references. E-mail: bagnio002@umn.edu Claire Bagniewski

► **News from NARREC** We released the adult White-backed Vulture with both ring and tag. Holger Kolberg came out to do the ringing/tagging and a news article (with a picture of a tag) has been submitted to the *Namibian* to encourage awareness and reports on tag sightings. We received an immature (2nd year?) White-backed Vulture on the 22 May from the Sees area. A most peculiar case; besides wrecked tail feathers and very scruffy primary tips, that could be from the weeks of captivity with the farmer, the bird had no secondaries on either wing and the coverts looked obviously cut. Liz Komen

Contact Liz (Tel. +264 (0)61 26 4409 or 26 4256) if you find any injured birds/small mammals.

► **News from the Kalahari** I have been very fortunate to have seen a couple of Pearl-spotted Owlets and several Spotted Eagle-Owls on my drives. I have not seen the tagged vulture at all, but I must admit that most of our drives have been in the other game camp and there are many vultures there. On a drive by myself, I found an oryx carcass that had fallen under a candle-pod acacia, which could not be spotted from the air. I towed it into the open because that afternoon we were expecting a large group of guests. As they were arriving, I told them all that I had a surprise in store for them. When they arrived back that evening, they had thoroughly enjoyed seeing the vultures feeding on the carcass. Corne de Lange



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