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**Some raptor news from Shamvura Camp and Kavango Region for the year 2007**

Mark Paxton

The year 2007 had some exciting raptor sightings and some dismally obvious negative trends. Species like Western-banded Snake Eagle and Dickinson's Kestrel remain almost impossible to find in this region as I reported earlier on. It's difficult to ascertain the exact reasons behind this phenomenon, as they don't share any common ground in the form of habitat selection or breeding and prey requirements. Dark Chanting Goshawk seem to remain one of the raptors not as regularly seen as before, although there seem to be more regular sightings of Pale Chanting Goshawk now. Could this indicate a change in habitat with increased deforestation more suitable to Pale Chanters?

Lizard Buzzards, although not quite as common as before, don't show a drastic declining trend and can still be relied upon to show up and be counted. Some passing ringers may also have noticed this, as the included photograph of a ringed bird found along the main tarred B1 road show. Some exciting sightings were recorded to brighten the year though:



Lizard Buzzard

Photo: Mark Paxton

- Cuckoo Hawks are by no means a common sighting, especially over the past 6 years. However, 2007 produced a few good sightings, since the first one on 14 October.
- A Sooty Falcon was first recorded at 09:00 on 19 September drinking water on a sandbar. This bird remained until we were very close. Then obligingly, it gave us a better view, even without our binoculars, of its

unbarred underside, when it took off and circled above us a few times. This bird was again seen from the river about a kilometre from the original sandbar some 10 days later.



Cuckoo Hawk

Photo: Mark Paxton

- A Long-legged Buzzard was first noted on 15 November and has since been seen on more than a dozen occasions in the same area for over a month, both flying overhead and sitting on a tree. This bird seems to have bold under-wing markings, but the rufous, unbarred tail is unmistakable on all occasions.
- Black Sparrowhawks produced at least one young bird from a nest in the riverine forest in front of the Camp two years ago. Since then they have not been seen in the area at all. However, on 20 December we saw an adult bird over the river nearby and the following day on one of the trees in the riverine forest. As this is our western-most sighting of this raptor, by no means common in Namibia, it is quite exciting and may constitute a resident breeding pair re-establishing themselves here.
- Ayres Hawk-Eagle are quite regularly seen at Shamvura Camp and in the immediate vicinity but are by no means common. I found an unconfirmed nest about 5 kms south of the camp 3 years ago. This nest was recently closely inspected and shows definite use but this was after the breeding season, so again no definite record of it being that of an Ayres Hawk-Eagle. However, during mid October I saw a pair of adults collaboratively chasing francolin within a kilometre of this nest site. Since then we have had numerous sightings of both adults and sub-adult birds at Shamvura Camp and in the immediate vicinity. Japie Claasens also found a sub-adult Ayres Hawk-Eagle carcass on the road some 20 kms east of Shamvura. The last confirmed sighting of a sub-adult bird being on 30 December when Trevor Hardacker and his group saw two different sub-adults and one adult bird being mobbed by a Bat Hawk. To the best of my knowledge, this is the closest to a confirmed breeding record of this raptor in Namibia and possibly Southern Africa, with Zimbabwe having the only confirmed breeding records so far. These sightings are therefore quite significant and this raptor will be getting more attention from me from now on.
- Bat Hawks have always been infrequently seen in this region and especially around Shamvura Camp. However, this year they have become more regular, even during midday, since the first sighting over Shamvura Camp during mid September. On 23 December, we watched three adult birds for a long time, loudly interacting, with a

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Photo: Mark Paxton



Bat Hawk

spectacular aerial display nearby, in a clearly territorial dispute, indicating a breeding situation. On 30 December, an adult Bat Hawk was seen mobbing an adult Ayres Hawk-Eagle from close at hand, but some kilometres away from the previous territorial display. Several other individual sightings between these dates seem to confirm they are now more evident here than before.

■ African Hobby regularly put in an appearance around Shamvura Camp and this year was no exception. We still see the bird doing its rounds above the camp at sundown on most evenings.

### News from NARREC

In January, Liz Komen of NARREC received a Black Sparrowhawk in poor condition from a farm 10 km north of Tsumeb. The female weighed less than 640 grams. The normal mass is 900 grams. It had managed to enter a henhouse but was cornered by geese. The bird has recovered and will be released in the north.

According to Roberts VII, widespread from Senegal to Somalia and south to South Africa, (on eastern side), Zimbabwe and northern Botswana and a few records from Caprivi.

Mr T J Pelser had to remove a Sociable Weaver nest from his windmill on the farm Onjossa in the Okahandja area. He found two Pygmy Falcon chicks in one of the nests. They are both doing well at NARREC.

A Peregrine Falcon flew first class from Swakopmund to Windhoek, courtesy of West Air. The bird appears to be concussed and in a poor condition. Thanks to Sandra Dantu and Mark Boorman for organising the flight.

During January in the Aminuis area, south of Gobabis, near the Botswana border, 23 White-backed Vultures, one Lappet-faced Vulture and one Tawny Eagle were poisoned. It is believed that the poison was a carbamate and put out to poison dogs from the communal area bordering a commercial farm. Communal farmers contacted the conservation department and ranger Loveness Ndeiweda found the dead birds and another 12 vultures sitting around or feeding on the carcass of a dog. These birds flew off. The dead vulture carcasses were burnt and buried. The Rare and Endangered Species Trust has asked for them to be exhumed and checked in case one of them is a Cape Vulture.

### News Flashes

- Sooty Falcon. Tim Osborne reports that he saw two Sooty Falcons on his farm Windpoort in the Outjo district in January. He first observed a small, dark falcon flying past his house. The next morning he found a juvenile Sooty perched in a tree. A few km further, he saw an adult Sooty Falcon.

According to Roberts VII, these falcons breed in Libya, Egypt, Persian Gulf and southwest Pakistan. Most spend austral summers in Madagascar. Vagrants to southern African coastal areas. There are a few previous records from Namibia.

- Vultures over Windhoek. On 16 January, two Lappet-faced Vultures were seen flying high over Ludwigsdorf, Windhoek. Seen on the small-holdings on the outskirts of town, but not often over the city itself.

Uschi & Joe Walter

- Vulture monitoring in Botswana 2007. Birds in the Makgadikgadi area in particular have had a high breeding success. We have 14 active Lappet-faced Vulture nests there that we know about. In a few other areas, there seems to have been a lot of poisoning and birds have disappeared – more work will tell what is going on in these areas.

Pete Hancock

### Honey Buzzards in Windhoek

John and Martin Mendelsohn

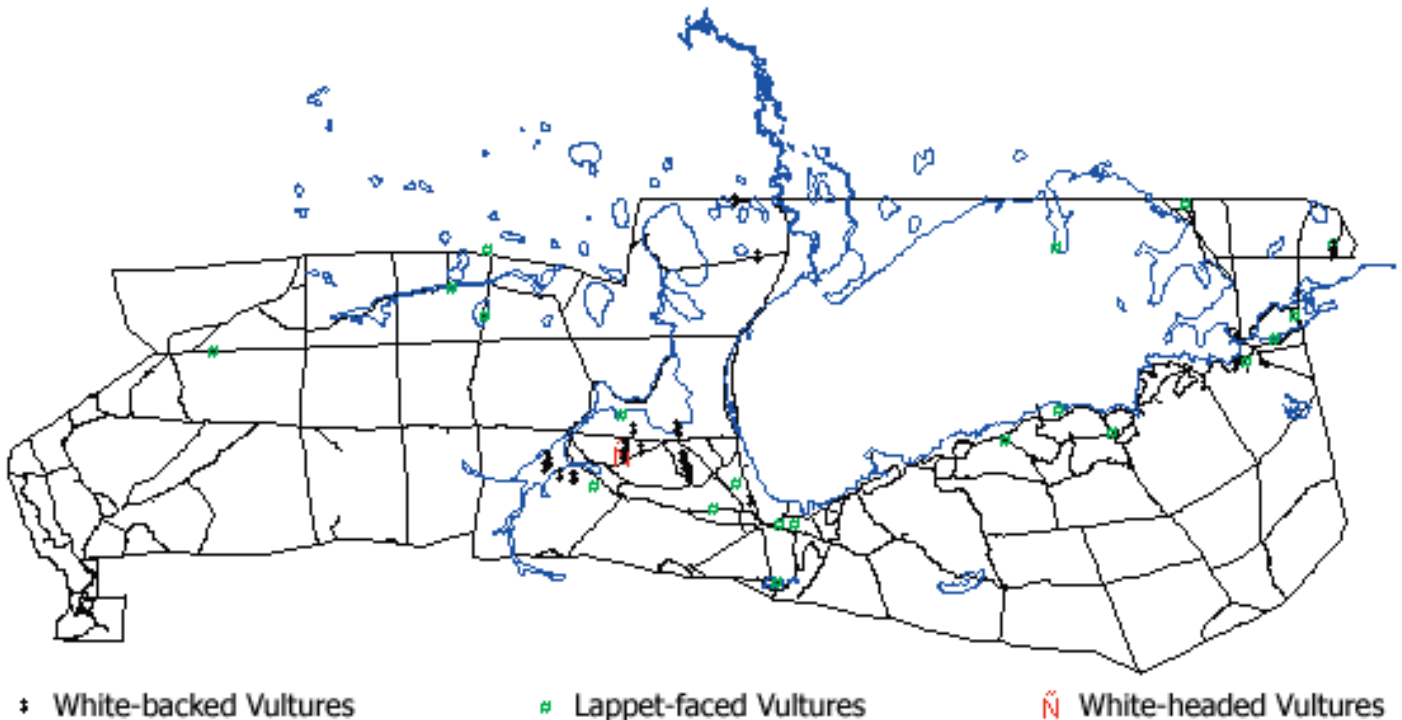
We have seen Honey Buzzard in Windhoek only sporadically over the past 20 years, perhaps one bird being seen every two or three years. However, there seem to be quite a number of these Palaearctic migrants in town this summer. As of the 20th of January 2008, we have had seven sightings, including two birds circling together. The photograph was taken of a confiding bird in a garden in Olympia. Three of the sightings have been in this suburb and the remaining four in Klein Windhoek. But the concentration of records in the two areas is probably coincidental because these are the suburbs in which we travel daily. It would be interesting to hear of other sightings in Windhoek to help assess if this is indeed a bumper year for Honey Buzzards and what other areas of the city they frequent.



Honey Buzzard

Photo: John Mendelsohn

## Vulture chick ringing in Etosha National Park, Namibia - 2007



### Mad dogs, Englishmen and vulture ringers in the midday sun.

Wilferd Versfeld  
Dirk Heinrich has finally ringed a White-headed Vulture! The first one ringed since October 2003 in Etosha. This was on 25 November 2007, when I did my last rounds. During September, I found two occupied White-headed Vulture nests to the north west of Leeubron. One nest contained an egg and as in 2002, the egg did not hatch. The other had a small fluffy chick in it. This bird now sports Dirk's ring and his name.

In October, a small fluffy White-backed Vulture chick was found. When I went back in November to ring, there was nothing in the nest. The nest had not recently been used, as there was no fresh down, food etc. The number of chicks found in the Namutoni area was disappointing. When we got there, most had already fledged. When I started in Okaukuejo, many of the nests had chicks too small for the tags. Therefore, I waited and when we did get around to Namutoni, the nests were already empty. What was interesting was the fact that the White-backed Vultures have

come back to the south of Adamax, to the Sprokieswoud area. When Tim Osborne started ringing, there were many nests in this area, then they moved away and now they seem to have come back again.

The wing tags give better results than the colour rings, as within a month of tagging, the first resighting was recorded. On 23 November, Shayne Kötting and Nigel Berriman saw a tagged White-backed Vulture, number E054, west of Sprokieswoud on the main road to M'bari. This bird was tagged on 20 September about 5.8 km north west of Leeubron.

This year, with the help of Gabriel Shatumbu and Dirk Heinrich, a total of 29 White-backed, a White-headed and 20 Lappet-faced Vultures were ringed in Etosha National Park. See the map for nesting sites.

The rumour that Dirk paid Wilferd to ring the White-headed Vulture is malicious gossip and this prestigious newsletter will not allow the name of any ringer to be tainted in any way

Editor.



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