

## THE BIRDS OF THE AUGRABIES FALLS NATIONAL PARK

by

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The Augrabies Falls National Park lies astride the Orange River at about 28° 30' S., 20° 20' E. On the north bank of the River, the Park extends from a point about 3 miles upstream of the falls to a point just below them; on the south bank, from a point one mile upstream to the end of the Gorges, seven miles below the falls.

The bird habitats of the Park may be classified as:

1. *Orange River*. Tremendous fluctuations in the water-level take place and, at its lowest, it may be crossed without wetting the feet. At its highest, it is several miles broad above the falls. The water is always muddy and the bird life sparse.

2. *Gorges* below the falls. Steep cliffs form the walls and the river, deeper than above, forms the bottom, with, at most, a narrow belt of rocks and mud, with some riverine bush, between it and the cliffs.

3. *Riverine Bush*, composed chiefly of acacias and tamarisks and much the richest habitat for birds. Above, and for a little way below, the falls, the river has many side-channels, each lined with this bush.

4. *Namaqua Broken Veld* (Acocks, 1953) is the bush-type away from the river. Scattered trees and bushes of *Acacia*, *Aloe* and other genera occur and there is a sparse grass cover.

5. *Irrigated Land*. This is, strictly speaking, outside the Park, but that between the main road and the Park boundary has been included in this survey.

When the Park was first established, only the upper portion of the gorges was included; but there was an extent of Namaqua Broken Veld on the south side between the road and the river which fell within its boundaries. Subsequently, this flat land was exchanged for the area comprising the rest of the gorges but it has been included in this account.

This paper is based on: (i) five personal visits to the Park, in April, 1967; February and October, 1968; June, 1969; and March, 1970; thus covering all seasons of the year; (ii) lists of birds observed by members of the Nature Conservation Department Survey, October, 1954; by Messrs. J. H. and P. H. Hofmeyr in September, 1961; and Mr. Philip Tongue in July, 1968; and filed in the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology.

No long-term data on the climate are available for the Park, but it is

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unlikely to differ materially from that of Kakamas, 25 miles to the east. Here the average annual rainfall is 130.5 mm, mostly falling between January and April and 68 % between October and March. However, as in all arid areas, the rainfall is very variable from year to year; and this affects both the numbers and the breeding seasons of the birds. The mean maximum daily temperature varies from 35.7° C in January to 20.9° C in July and the mean daily minima from 19° C in January to 4.1° C in July. The extremes are 43.3°C in January and -4.7° C in July.

According to Köppen's classification, the climate of Augrabies falls into his BWkw', which is a desert climate; and according to Thornthwaite's classification it is EB'd, or Arid Warm (Schulze, 1947).

I have kept daily lists of all species observed on all five visits. These number 37, and the following species occur in 28 or more and are therefore the most likely to be seen by a visitor:

Cape Turtle Dove, Laughing Dove, Cape Coly, Pied Barbet, Rock Martin, African Sand Martin, Red-eyed Bulbul, Pirit Batis, Black-chested Prinia, Familiar Chat, Cape Robin, Karoo Robin, Cape Wagtail, Pale-winged Starling, Dusky Sunbird, Pale White-eye, Cape Sparrow, Masked Weaver, Red Bishop, Yellow-rumped Canary and White-throated Seed-eater.

The following species, though not recorded so frequently, were seen on every visit and should be seen if looked for:

Fish Eagle, Chanting Goshawk, Cape Francolin, Three-banded Plover, Namaqua Sandgrouse, Rock Pigeon, Namaqua Dove, Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, Red-faced Coly, Sabota Lark, Spike-heeled Lark, Grey Tit, Tit-babbler, Chat Flycatcher, Crombec, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Rufous-eared Warbler, Namaqua Prinia, Olive Thrush, Mountain Chat, Fiscal, Brubru, Bokmakierie, Red-shouldered Starling, Grey-headed Sparrow, Scaly Weaver, Red-billed Quelea, Red-billed Firefinch, Common Waxbill, Yellow Canary, Cape Bunting and Lark-like Bunting.

In the Systematic List which follows, an asterisk indicates that one or more specimens have been collected, by me or by others. Nomenclature follows the South African Ornithological Society "Check List" (1969).

#### *Systematic List*

Reed Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax africanus*, Rietduiker

One on the river, 16 April, 1967.

Grey Heron, *Ardea cinerea*, Blou Reier

Singles seen not infrequently on the river or flying over.

Black-headed Heron, *A. melanocephala*, Swartkop Reier

Seen frequently, chiefly in lucerne; singles.

Hamerkop, *Scopus umbretta*, Hamerkop

Always present along the river, especially at drying pools.

White Stork, *Ciconia ciconia*, Groot Wit Sprinkaanvoël

One flying over, 4 February, 1968.

Black Stork, *C. nigra*, Groot Swart Sprinkaanvoël

- Seen in February, June and October, so evidently resident. May breed in the gorge.
- White-bellied Stork, *C. abdimii*, Klein Swart Sprinkaanvoël  
Two in lucerne on edge of the Park, 22 February, 1968.
- African Shelduck, *Tadorna cana*, Bergeend  
Noted flying over twice in April, 1967.
- Egyptian Goose, *Alopochen aegyptiacus*, Kolgans  
Always about, in pairs or small parties.
- Black Duck, *Anas sparsa*, Swart Eend  
Scarce, but a resident species, usually seen in pairs.
- Cape Wigeon, *A. capensis*, Teeleendjie  
Two on the river, 23 and 24 April, 1967; and 7 and 13 June, 1969.
- Yellow-billed Kite, *Milvus migrans*, Geelbek-wou  
Noted on two days in February, 1968; more regular near the hotel, three miles east.
- Black-shouldered Kite, *Elanus caeruleus*, Blouvalkie  
Noted 20 and 25 October, 1968, and 7 June 1969.
- Black Eagle, *Aquila verreauxi*, Witkruis-arend  
Nesting in the gorges below the Falls, 12 June, 1969.
- Martial Eagle, *Polemaetus bellicosus*, Breëkop-arend  
Seen on three days in October, 1968, an immature.
- Black-breasted Snake-Eagle, *Circaetus gallicus*, Swartbors-slangarend  
Seen on four days in April, 1967, two together on the 15th, otherwise singly.
- African Fish-eagle, *Haliaeetus vocifer*, Visarend  
Regular on the river.
- Steppe Buzzard, *Buteo buteo*, Bruin Jakkalsvoël  
Noted 25 February, 1968, and 12 March, 1970.
- Jackal Buzzard, *B. rufofuscus*, Jakkalsvoël  
Rare; seen on three days on three different visits in Namaqua Broken Veld.
- Chanting Goshawk, *Melierax musicus*, Groot Witvalk  
One or two present in Namaqua Broken Veld on all visits.
- Lanner, *Falco biarmicus*, Edelvalk  
One in Namaqua Broken Veld, 13 April, 1967; and an immature at the Red Bishop colony, 21–24 February, 1968.
- Rock Kestrel, *F. tinnunculus*, Rooivalkie  
Namaqua Broken Veld; but thinly distributed.
- Greater Kestrel, *F. rupicoloides*, Groot Rooivalkie  
One in Namaqua Broken Veld, 16 April, 1967.
- Pygmy Falcon, *Poliohierax semitorquatus*, Dwergvalkie  
A pair near a nest of *Philetairus socius*, 8 June, 1969. Previously recorded by P. Tongue, July, 1968.
- Cape Francolin, *Francolinus capensis*, Kaapse Fisant  
Riverine bush; has undoubtedly increased over the last three years.

- Quail, *Coturnix coturnix*, Afrikaanse Kwartel  
Noted on two days in October, 1968.
- Helmeted Guineafowl, *Numida meleagris*, Tarentaal  
Only on two days in October, 1968.
- Ludwig's Bustard, *Otis ludwigii*, Ludwigse Pou  
Seen singly or in a pair on three days in April, 1967; two, 22 October, 1968. In Namaqua Broken Veld.
- Water Dikkop, *Burhinus vermiculatus*, Waterdikkop  
Noted, 23 October, 1968 and 11–14 March, 1970; also recorded by the N.C.D. party, October, 1954.
- Blacksmith Plover, *Vanellus armatus*, Bontkiewietjie  
Resident on pools near the river.
- Three-banded Plover, *Charadrius tricollaris*, Drieband-strandloper  
Common on pools and beside the river.
- Common Sandpiper, *Tringa hypoleucos*, Gewone Ruiter  
One on a pool in the river, 10 March, 1970.
- Wood Sandpiper, *T. glareola*, Bosruiter  
Seen on pools near the river, 23 and 25 February, 1968.
- Namaqua Sandgrouse, *Pterocles namaqua*, Kelkiewyn  
Always present but in widely fluctuating numbers.  
Breeding, October, 1968. Mr. Bruwer reports a big eastward migration in April, 1969.
- Double-banded Sandgrouse, *P. bicinctus*, Dubbelband-sandpatrys  
A male and two females in the rocky hills below the Falls, 12 April, 1967. In March, 1970, at least 30 were noted coming to drink at dusk at pools in the river on the north bank.
- Rock Pigeon, *Columba guinea*, Bosduif  
Common in and near the gorges, whence it forages far into the surrounding country.
- Cape Turtle Dove, *Streptopelia capicola*, Tortelduif  
Abundant in riverine bush and Namaqua Broken Veld. Breeding in June, 1969.
- Laughing Dove, *S. senegalensis*, Rooibors-duifie  
Fairly common in riverine bush. Breeding in June, 1969.
- Namaqua Dove, *Oena capensis*, Namakwa-duifie  
Always present in riverine bush and Namaqua Broken Veld but in varying numbers. Breeding in June, 1969.
- Didric Cuckoo, *Chrysococcyx caprius*, Diedrikkie  
A young bird being fed by Cape Sparrows in riverine bush, 12–17 April, 1967; and heard calling, 24 October, 1968; and 11 June, 1969.
- Rosy-faced Lovebird, *Agapornis roseicollis*, Rooikop-parakiet  
Although sometimes present in big flocks, my only personal encounters with it are of one or two in riverine bush, 21–24 February, 1968; and, up to 8, 8–11 March, 1970.
- Giant Eagle-owl, *Bubo lacteus*, Reuse-ooruil

- Recorded by P. Tongue, July, 1968.
- Spotted Eagle Owl, *B. africanus*, Gevlekte Ooruil  
One by the river, 10 March, 1970.
- Barn Owl, *Tyto alba*, Nonnetjie-uil  
Heard in the camp on four nights in October, 1968.
- Rufous-cheeked Nightjar, *Caprimulgus rufigena*, Rooiwang-naguil  
Noted twice in October, 1968, and once in March, 1970.
- Pied Kingfisher, *Ceryle rudis*, Bont Visvanger  
One, 11 June, 1969. Also noted by Tongue, July, 1968.
- Malachite Kingfisher, *Alcedo cristata*, Kuifkop-visvanger  
Two at a pool, 25 February, 1968. Also noted by J. H. and P. K. Hofmeyr, September, 1961.
- European Bee-eater, *Merops apiaster*, Europese Byvreter  
Not observed by me but recorded by the N.C.D. party in October, 1964.
- Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, *M. hirundineus*, Mikstert-byvreter  
Regular and common in riverine bush.
- Hoopoe, *Upupa epops*, Hoephoep  
Resident in riverine bush.
- Scimitarbill, *Rhinopomastus cyanomelas*, Swartbek-kakelaar  
Resident in riverine bush but not common.
- Cape Coly, *Colius colius*, Witkruis-muisvoël  
Numerous in riverine bush. Breeding, February, 1968.
- Red-faced Coly, *C. indicus*, Rooiwang-muisvoël  
Sporadic in riverine bush.
- Black Swift, *Apus barbatus*, Swart Windswawel  
I have not seen it but it is recorded by others.
- Alpine Swift, *A. melba*, Grootste Windswawel  
Common in the gorges, whence it ranges far over the veld; but inexplicably absent, March, 1970. Augrabies birds belong to the South West African race, *A. m. marjoriae*.
- White-rumped Swift, *A. caffer*, Witkruis-windswawel  
Only 25th February, 1968.
- Little Swift, *A. affinis*, Klein Windswawel  
Noted twice in October, 1968.
- \*Pied Barbet, *Lybius leucomelas*, Bont Houtkapper  
Common in riverine bush and Namaqua Broken Veld.
- \*Golden-tailed Woodpecker, *Campethera abingoni*, Goudstert-spegt  
Regular in riverine bush.
- \*Cardinal Woodpecker, *Dendropicos fuscescens*, Kardinaal-spegt  
Regular in riverine bush.
- Greater Honeyguide, *Indicator indicator*, Groot Heuningwyser  
Heard in riverine bush, 11 April, 1967.
- \*Lesser Honeyguide, *I. minor*, Klein Heuningwyser  
Noted twice in riverine bush in October, 1968, and once in June, 1969.

- \*Sabota Lark, *Mirafrja sabota*, Sabota-lewerkie  
 Resident, and at times common, in Namaqua Broken Veld. In breeding condition, April, 1967.
- Grey-backed Finch-Lark, *Eremopterix leucotis*, Grys Kaffertjie  
 Present always, but in fluctuating number, in Namaqua Broken Veld. Many in April, 1967 and October, 1968.
- Black-eared Finch-Lark, *E. australis*, Egte Kaffertjie  
 Recorded by the Nature Conservation Department Survey, October, 1964.
- \*Long-billed Lark, *Certhilauda curvirostris*, Langbek-lewerkie  
 Common in Namaqua Broken Veld.
- Karoo Lark, *C. albescens*, Karoo-lewerkie  
 Only in April, 1967, when common for several days in Namaqua Broken Veld.
- Spike-heeled Lark, *C. albofasciata*, Vlakvoëltjie  
 Common in Namaqua Broken Veld. Nest with well-grown young, 15 April, 1967.
- European Swallow, *Hirundo rustica*, Europese Swawel  
 Common in riverine bush and Namaqua Broken Veld in February, 1968.
- White-throated Swallow, *H. albigularis*, Witkeel-swawel  
 A few near the river, February, March, April and October.
- Pearl-breasted Swallow, *H. dimidiata*, Pêrelbors-swaweltjie  
 One record, 20 October, 1968.
- \*Rock Martin, *H. rupestris*, Kransswawel  
 Abundant in the gorges and forages over the Namaqua Broken Veld.
- African Sand Martin, *Riparia paludicola*, Afrikaanse Oewerswawel  
 Abundant near the river.
- Fork-tailed Drongo, *Dicrurus adsimilis*, Mikstert-byvanger  
 I have not identified it but it is recorded by J. H. and P. K. Hofmeyr, September, 1961.
- Grey Tit, *Parus afer*, Pietjouwjou  
 Regular, but not numerous, in riverine bush.
- \*Red-eyed Bulbul, *Pycnonotus nigricans*, Rooioog-tiptol  
 Numerous in riverine bush and Namaqua Broken Veld. Feeding fledged young, April 1967.
- Spotted Flycatcher, *Muscicapa striata*, Europese Vlieëvanger  
 Noted on two days in February, 1968, in riverine bush; quite common there in March, 1970.
- Tit-babbler, *Parisoma subcaeruleum*, Tjeriktik  
 Riverine bush; not very common.
- \*Chat Flycatcher, *Melaenornis infuscata*, Groot Vlieëvanger  
 Fairly common in Namaqua Broken Veld. Nest with young and a fledged juvenile, April, 1967.
- Pririt Batis, *Batis pririt*, Pririt-bosbontrokkie

- Common in riverine bush and Namaqua Broken Veld.
- Fairy Flycatcher, *Stenostira scita*, Feë-vlieëvanger  
Two in riverine bush, 11 June, 1969; one, 11 and 12 March, 1970.
- \*African Marsh Warbler, *Acrocephalus baeticatus*, Klein Rietsanger  
Regular in the reed-beds on the edge of the Park; and occasional in riverine bush.
- Cinnamon-breasted Warbler, *Camaroptera subcinnamomea*, Kaneelbors-sanger  
I have not identified it but it is said to occur and there is suitable habitat.
- Yellow-bellied Eremomela, *Eremomela icteropygialis*, Geelbuik-Bossanger  
Fairly common in Namaqua Broken Veld.
- Long-billed Crombec, *Sylvietta rufescens*, Krombec  
Riverine bush and Namaqua Broken Veld; uncommon.
- Fan-tailed Cisticola, *Cisticola juncidis*, Gewone Veldtinginkie  
Noted in lucerne, February and October, 1968, and June, 1969, and March, 1970.
- \*Grey-backed Cisticola, *C. subruficapilla*, Grysrug-tinginkie  
Namaqua Broken Veld; uncommon.
- \*Rufous-eared Warbler, *Prinia pectoralis*, Rooioor-kleinjantjie  
Fairly common in Namaqua Broken Veld.
- \*Black-chested Prinia, *P. flavicans*, Swartbors-Langstert-tinginkie  
Riverine bush and Namaqua Broken Veld; but not very common.
- Namaqua Prinia, *P. substriata*, Namakwa-langstert-tinginkie  
Common in riverine bush.
- \*Olive Thrush, *Turdus olivaceus*, Kaapse Lyster  
Common in riverine bush and has increased during the last three years.
- Mountain Chat, *Oenanthe monticola*, Bergtapuit  
Regular in Namaqua Broken Veld and round the camp, where it has bred.
- Capped Wheatear, *O. pileata*, Skaapwagter  
One in Namaqua Broken Veld, 11 April, 1967.
- \*Familiar Chat, *Cercomela familiaris*, Spekvreter  
Fairly common in riverine bush.
- Tractrac Chat, *C. tractrac*, Klein Spekvreter  
Common in Namaqua Broken Veld.
- Karoo Chat, *C. schlegelii*, Bleektapuit  
Fairly common in Namaqua Broken Veld.
- Ant-eating Chat, *Myrmecocichla formicivora*, Swartpiek  
Seen in Namaqua Broken Veld on two days in October, 1968.
- Cape Robin, *Cossypha caffra*, Janfrederik  
Common in riverine bush.
- Kalahari Robin, *Erythroptgia paena*, Wipstert  
Occasional in Namaqua Broken Veld.
- \*Karoo Robin, *E. coryphaeus*, Slangverklikker

- Common in riverine bush and Namaqua Broken Veld.  
 African Pied Wagtail, *Motacilla aguimp*, Bont Kwikkie  
 Sparingly distributed along the river.
- Cape Wagtail, *M. capensis*, Kwikkie  
 Common on the river and in the camp.
- \*Richard's Pipit, *A. novaeseelandiae*, Gewone Koester  
 Seen on two days in October, 1968.
- Long-billed Pipit, *A. similis*, Nicholsonse Koester  
 I have not seen it, but it is recorded by others.
- Fiscal, *Lanius collaris*, Laksman  
 Sparse; riverine bush and Namaqua Broken Veld.
- Red-backed Shrike, *L. collurio*, Rooirug-laksman  
 Two, 10 March, 1970.
- Brubru, *Nilaus afer*, Bontrok-laksman  
 Riverine bush; but uncommon.
- Bokmakierie, *Malaconotus zeylonus*, Bokmakierie  
 Fairly common, chiefly in Namaqua Broken Veld but sometimes  
 very tame in the camp.
- Red-shouldered Starling, *Lamprotornis nitens*, Klein Glansspreeu  
 Sparse; Namaqua Broken Veld.
- \*Pale-winged Starling, *Onychognathus naboroupp*, Bleekvlerk-spreeu  
 Abundant in the Gorges, Namaqua Broken Veld, and riverine  
 bush. Feeding fledged young, April, 1967 and March, 1970.
- Dusky Sunbird, *Nectarinia fusca*, Namakwa-suikerbekkie  
 Abundant in riverine bush and Namaqua Broken Veld. Breeding  
 in June.
- Lesser Double-collared Sunbird, *N. chalybea*, Klein Rooibors-suikerbekkie  
 A single male in riverine bush, 25 February, 1968.
- \*Pale White-eye, *Zosterops pallidus*, Kaapse Glasogie  
 Abundant in riverine bush.
- House Sparrow, *Passer domesticus*, Engelse Mossie  
 Does not seem to have established itself in the camp but occurs  
 occasionally.
- Great Sparrow, *P. motitensis*, Groot Mossie  
 Sparse, riverine bush. Nest-building, February, 1968.
- \*Cape Sparrow, *P. melanurus*, Mossie  
 Common in riverine bush. Feeding young in the nest, fledged  
 young and a young Didric Cuckoo, April, 1967; nest-building  
 and feeding fledged young, June, 1969; young in the nest, March,  
 1970.
- Grey-headed Sparrow, *P. griseus*, Gryskop-mossie  
 Sparse; riverine bush.
- White-browed Sparrow-Weaver, *Plocepasser mahali*, Koringvoël  
 Singles seen on two days in March, 1970.
- \*Social Weaver, *Philetairus socius*, Familievoël  
 At least one nesting colony in Namaqua Broken Veld, where for-



- aging parties are encountered from time to time.
- \*Scaly Weaver, *Sporopipes squamifrons*, Baardmannetjie  
Was common and breeding in Namaqua Broken Veld, April, 1967; sparse on other visits.
  - Masked Weaver, *Ploceus velatus*, Swartkeel-geelvink  
Abundant in riverine bush.
  - Red-billed Quelea, *Quelea quelea*, Rooibek-vink  
There were few in February, 1968; on other visits, present in flocks in riverine bush and Namaqua Broken Veld.
  - Red Bishop, *Euplectes orix*, Rooi Kaffervink  
Abundant in the reed-bed on the edge of the Park.
  - Red-billed Firefinch, *Lagonosticta senegala*, Rooibek-robbin  
Common in riverine bush; appears to have increased in the last three years.
  - Common Waxbill, *Estrilda astrild*, Rooibekkie  
In riverine bush, often abundantly.
  - Pin-tailed Whydah, *Vidua macroura*, Koning-rooibekkie  
Regular in riverine bush.
  - Yellow-rumped Canary, *Serinus atrogularis*, Bergkanarie  
Common, Namaqua Broken Veld and riverine bush. Breeding, April, 1967.
  - Black-headed Canary, *S. alario*, Swartkop-kanarie  
Recorded once, at a pool, 25 February, 1968. It was an example of the northern race, *S. a. leucolaema*.
  - Yellow Canary, *S. flaviventris*, Geelsysie  
Namaqua Broken Veld; not numerous.
  - \*White-throated Seed-eater, *S. albogularis*, Witkeel-dikbek-sysie  
Common in Namaqua Broken Veld, and riverine bush.
  - \*Cape Bunting, *Emberiza capensis*, Streepkoppie  
Common where there are rocks.
  - \*Lark-like Bunting, *E. impetuani*, Vaal Streepkoppie  
Abundant, Namaqua Broken Veld. Breeding, April, 1967, and June, 1969.

The following sight-records have been omitted from this list pending confirmation:

- Rufous-necked Kestrel, *Falco chicquera*, Rooinek-valkie
- Little Bee-eater, *Merops pusillus*, Klein Byvreter
- Pennant-winged Nightjar, *Macrodipteryx vexillarius*, Wimpelvlerek-naguil
- Marico Flycatcher, *Melaenornis mariquensis*, Marico-vlieëvanger
- Red-winged Starling, *Onychognathus morio*, Rooivlerk-spreeu
- Pied Starling, *Spreo bicolor*, Witgat-spreeu
- Black Widow-Finch, *Hypochera funerea*, Blou Vinkie. (If *Hypochera* sp. does occur, it would almost certainly be *H. amauropteryx*, which parasitises *Lagonosticta senegala*).

The following species, recorded from the vicinity of the Falls Hotel, will undoubtedly be found within the Park limits in due course:

Red-knobbed Coot, *Fulica cristata*, Bleshoender  
Greenshank, *Tringa nebularia*, Groenpoot-ruiter

In addition, *Mirafra africanoides*, the Fawn-coloured Lark, Vaalbruinlewierkie, is known from the area north of the river between the Park boundary and Kakamas and may be expected to occur in the Park too.

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