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Get to know birds that may be a hazard to aircraft.

Black-chested Snake Eagle (*Circaetus pectoralis*)

Easily distinguishable by its contrasting dark head and white underparts this eagle weighing up to 2.3kg is fairly common in Namibia. It hovers when it sees prey and swoops to the ground to catch it. As the name suggests it eats snakes, but also other reptiles, rodents and small birds.



WILDLIFE AND AIRCRAFT RESEARCH NAMIBIA PROJECT (WARN)



Morgan Hauptfleisch
Wildlife and Aircraft Research Namibia (WARN) University of the Free-State Centre for Environmental Management; Polytechnic of Namibia, Southern African Institute for Environmental Assessment

In collaboration with the Namibia Airports Company (NAC), the Southern African Institute for Environmental Assessment, the Polytechnic of Namibia, the National Museum of Namibia, and the National Museum of South Africa

Detailed reports and research results are available on request, the newsletter merely gives a broad summary

Some 2014 bird strike issues explained

Weather conditions in 2014 have generally been favourable for ecosystems and biodiversity. In terms of bird and other wildlife strikes this meant higher risk.

An influx of migratory birds to central Namibia early in 2014 was possibly a direct result of the good rainfall compared to other parts of the Southern African sub region. Species such as Yellow-billed Kite (*Milvus aegyptius*) and Steppe Buzzard (*Buteo vulpinus*) (picture right) were often seen in the vicinity of Hosea Kutako and Eros airports. Collisions with both species were reported. During this time NAC increased runway inspections and scaring activities.

Of interest for aviators is the difference in behaviour displayed by the two species. Steppe Buzzard hunt from a perch, while Yellow-billed Kite hunt in flight—meandering across the sky and then occasionally diving down to catch prey on the ground. This makes them more likely to be encountered in the sky, while Steppe Buzzard are less likely to be seen in flight and tend to descend fast if disturbed.

When the rain finally came to the north-central parts of the country, we received more reports of these species, as well as flocks of Woolly-

necked Stork (*Ciconia episcopus*) and White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*) from Ondangwa and Rundu.

Vultures remain a concern (mostly during cruise) and a research project is underway to look at this (see planned activities on page 2).

Below: Steppe Buzzard



Two new students stationed at our Eros bird strike lab

NAC is once again sponsoring two six month internships for students from the Polytechnic of Namibia. Johanna Nghishiko and William Lloyd are final year Bachelor of Natural Resource Management students who are required to complete a six month work internship and conduct a research project in a field related to the manage-

ment of natural resources, wildlife or tourism. There have to date been 6 interns and two post graduates stationed at the project over the past four years. NAC are once again thanked for including the student costs in their corporate social responsibility programme. In addition to their research projects (detailed on page 2)

the students are available to all airport and aviation staff to identify possible wildlife risks at NAC airports. They are also collecting bird strike reports and compiling quarterly bird strike statistics. The remains of any birdstrike animals can be taken to them at Eros for identification and analysis.



Photo above: Red-footed falcon are summer visitors seen feeding on insects on the HK apron

Studies on the effect of apron lights on bird strike risk

Following on from last year's light attractiveness experiment, William Lloyd is using the Variable Circular Plot (VCP) method to count birds in the early morning at Hosea Kutako's apron as well as a site away from the light source.

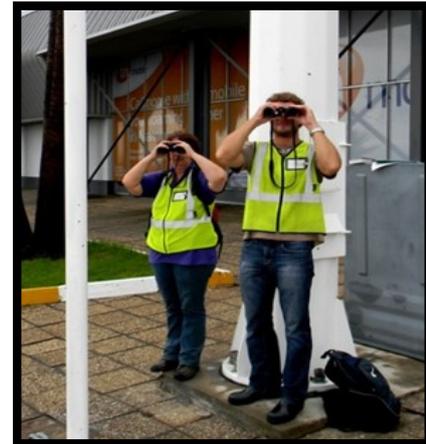
To confirm the theory that birds are attracted to insects lured to the apron lights of HKIA, the results from the surveys at both sites will be compared. As all bird species do not present a risk towards aircraft, a risk assessment of the birds identified from the above mentioned reports will be conducted, using the Avian Risk Assessment model. To date, it has been in-

teresting to see that although more birds have been recorded in the grassland area to the east of the terminal buildings than on the apron, the species are far smaller than ones frequenting the apron. The study will also look at the behaviour of the birds at each site.

In addition to this Christa D'Alton is continuing with her project from last year to determine insect abundance and diversity at the light sources around Hosea Kutako's apron. She was recently awarded her Honours degree based on her "light colour experiments" at Eros

and Hosea Kutako. The current research now forms part of her Masters degree.

Below: Christa and William in action at Hosea Kutako



"thanks"

Many thanks to the following persons for assistance with this research:

Norman Pule, Mia Davids, Toska Sem, Bernard Sivulala, Johannes Vries, Oscar Hamutenya, Jason Kweyo, (and many other friendly NAC staff), Marco Konings, Will Dalling, Seth Eiseb, Apolonia Dierks, Dr. Peter Tarr, John Pallett, Gudrun Denker, Dr. Nico Avenant, Jurie du Plessis, Dr. Chris Brown, Dr. John Mendelsohn, Dr. Ann and Mike Scott, Maria Diekmann Prof. Maitland Seaman, Dr. Daan Toerien, Dr. Willie Jankowitz, Peter Keil, Nico Kopf, the Trumper family, Ondekaremba Lodge, Arebbusch Lodge and the Windhoek Golf Club.

WARN appointed TOP-COACH for World Bird Strike Association 2014

WARN has been nominated by the World Bird Strike Association as a "Topcoach" for its work in the field of wildlife ecology and training. This means that it will provide mentorship to new professionals dealing with bird strike issues around the world.

The "Topcoach" programme will allow for face to face discussions at the biannual World Birdstrike Association conference which is to be held in Mexico in November 2014. WARN anticipates sending the best student researcher from 2013 to this conference, to present research results of all research project since 2012.



3rd year Polytechnic student assesses Ondangwa

Johanna Nghishiko is investigating the bird strike hazards and risks at Ondangwa airport. A number of reports of near-miss and collisions with birds were reported to WARN in early 2014. At the insistence of the Ondangwa airport manager, Johanna was stationed there

to assess the bird species and frequency of occurrence of birds at and in the vicinity of the airport. Her study included physical inspections, trapping and remote camera trapping.

Her initial findings indicate that Yellow-billed Kites (*Mulvis aegyptius*) fre-

quently flock over the townlands of Ondangwa as well as the airport in search of food. They are sometimes called "rainbirds" by the locals and often follow eruptions of grasshoppers and other insects after good rain. Recommendations have been made to Ondangwa about minimising their occurrence. Her research continues.

Some of WARN's current and planned work

WARN gave a presentation at the Botanical Society of Namibia in March 2014 titled: "Can plants cause plane crashes—the curious link between vegetation management and bird strike risk at Namibia's main airports." It presented findings regarding the effect of grass mowing and removal of woody vegetation at airports on lowering the risk of bird strikes.

WARN's coordinator was awarded researcher of the year 2013 for the School of Natural Resources and Tourism at the Polytechnic of Namibia. The award included a printer and cash donation which is being put to good use at the bird strike centre.

Together with the Polytechnic's Department of Geospatial Sci-

ences and Technology, WARN is currently looking to use remote sensing technology to determine most likely areas of conflict between aircraft and vultures in Namibia. This study is in response to a number of near miss incidents that have been reported with vultures throughout the country. Results of this study will be available towards the end of 2014.