

## SHORT NOTE

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## Feeding associations between birds and mammals in the Skeleton Coast Park

by

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Although the complex feeding association between birds and mammals has been described in detail by Dean and MacDonald (1981) with additional records by Gregory (1982) and Harwin (1982), further observations can be added to these lists.

The observations are all from the Skeleton Coast Park, South West Africa/Namibia, mostly in the vicinity of the Ugab and Unjab Rivers.

### 1 LANIDAE

Fiscal Shrikes *Lanius collaris* were seen on several occasions hawking insects in the company of gemsbok *Oryx gazella*. The Fiscals were usually perched on vantage points and would go down into the vegetation after insects disturbed by the grazing gemsbok.

Fiscals were only twice seen to perch on gemsbok, but on neither occasion were ectoparasites taken. Dean and MacDonald (1981) recorded Fiscals "sometimes" perching on domestic animals.

### 2 CORVIDAE

The Black Crows *Corvus capensis* observed in the company of gemsbok have only been seen to take ectoparasites from them and not to feed on disturbed insects.

Records by Dean and MacDonald (1981) are of Black Crows gleaning ectoparasites from domestic animals only. On gemsbok the birds were particularly active around the mane and neck. They also walked around gemsbok lying down, pecking at the anal region.

Pied Crows *Corvus albus*, although numerically more than Black Crows, were only once observed sitting on a gemsbok. Penzhorn (1980) observed Pied Crows attempting to perch on mountain zebra *Equus zebra* and Winterbottom (1975) records them eating ectoparasites from black rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis*.

### 3 STURNIDAE

Although Wattled Starlings *Creatophora cinerea* are distributed throughout South West Africa (McLachlan and Liversidge 1978) they are only occasionally found in the Skeleton Coast Park.

A Wattled Starling was seen gleaning parasites from the back of a gemsbok and it also hawked insects disturbed by the gemsbok.

According to Dean and MacDonald (1981) Wattled Starlings have been recorded feeding in association with many species of game (including gemsbok) and domestic animals. However, they had no records of Wattled Starlings taking ectoparasites.

Cape Glossy Starlings *Lamprotornis nitens* have been seen gleaning ectoparasites from gemsbok and feeding

on the ground around the grazing animals (R. Loutit, 1982, pers. comm.). Dean and MacDonald (1981) record Cape Glossy Starlings feeding in association with several species of game, including gemsbok, as well as with domestic cattle.

#### 4 MOTACILLIDAE

Cape Wagtails *Motacilla capensis* have been recorded associating with domestic and wild ungulates, including gemsbok (Dean and MacDonald 1981).

Two Cape Wagtails and a Wattled Starling were all seen hawking insects disturbed by the same gemsbok. On another occasion a Wagtail was twice seen to go into the grass next to a grazing gemsbok.

#### 5 LARIDAE AND PROCELLARIIDAE

At Torra Bay a Cape fur seal *Arctocephalus pusillus* was seen close inshore with a fish in its mouth. A juvenile Southern Black-backed Gull *Larus dominicanus* and a Cape Hen *Procellaria aequinoctialis* were floating within a metre of the seal.

The seal, by flicking its head, hurled the fish several metres, a process it repeated five times. On each occasion, pieces of fish broke off and were eaten by the two birds who also actively followed the seal to where it emerged with the fish in its mouth.

Dean and MacDonald (1981) only record Laridae feeding in association with hippopotamuses *Hippopotamus amphibius*.

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