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AERIAL ATTACK - INTERACTION BETWEEN TWO TRACTRAC CHATS

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On a late June morning while driving on a farm road in the treeless gravel plains in Namibia (coordinates 22°25'S 15°24'E) I saw what looked like a Tractrac Chat cercomela (Emarginata) tractrac flying and repeatedly attacking something on the ground. At first I thought it might have struck down a snake or maybe a shrike on the ground, but it turned out to be another Tractrac Chat which was ducking every time another assault came down on it.

The attacker was uninterruptedly “chattering” in excitement, giving fast loud clicking and cracking sounds I had never heard these sounds from this species before. It shot down at an angle of 45 degrees from about 3 m height, describing a large "8" in the air, turning and rising to attack again and again. This went on for two or three attacks.
three minutes and it stopped only when I drove closer to have a better look.

Unfortunately, from my point of observation I could not define the sex or age of the birds to be able to refer this behaviour to possible territory defense, e.g. one male attacking another (younger?) male, or to a possible pre-mating display by a male trying to impress the female?

**Further reading**


![Figure 3 – Close up of adult Tractrac Chat.](image-url)