

Western Cape Birding Forum

Now represents 17 clubs with more than 2,000 members in the Western Cape.

Minutes at Durbanville Nature Reserve, Durbanville on Saturday, 5 June 2010.

Vernon Head - Chaired the Meeting.

? - Minutes.

Present

Cape Bird Club: Vernon Head, Anne Gray, Jo Hobbs, Shaun Overmeyer

Hermanus Bird Club: Barbara Palmer, Terry Demmer, Lee Burman

Paarl: Yvonne Weiss

Somerset West Bird Club: Brian Dennis, Ben Kakebeeke, Jill Mortimer, Rene Lind

Tygerberg Bird Club: Brian van der Walt, Helene Thompson, Gerald Wingate

West Coast Bird Club: Keith Harrison, Jan Kotze

BirdLife Berg River: Robyn Kadis

BirdLife Overberg: Anton Odendal

BirdLife Stellenbosch: Peet le Roux, Willene Van der Merwe

Also attending Kate Webster (Stormberg Raptor Rehabilitation Centre, Queenstown)

Apologies

Sylvia Ledgard, Brian Dennis, Otto Schmidt, Royd Frith, Etienne van Heerde (BirdLife Strandveld), Peter Nupen, Ross Wanless and Bronwyn Maree (in Johannesburg to receive an Owl Award).

Welcome

Vernon welcomed all and mentioned that 5 June is World Environment Day, so it was fitting that we busied ourselves with environmental issues! A special welcome was extended to Kate Webster, to Gerald Wingate of Tygerberg Bird Club, Rene Lind of Somerset West and Shaun Overmeyer.

Minutes of Previous Meeting (13/02/2009): Agreed.

GENERAL

Anton Odendal reported on BLO's fundraising efforts. They are having a raffle for a painting of an African Penguin. Clubs are asked to take raffle sheets; the draw will be in September at SANCCOB. Their upcoming golf day should be a great success, as everything is going well. Funds raised will be split between Dyer Island Conservation Trust, SANCCOB and Save-our-Seabirds.

Vernon reported that on 26 May this year, the African penguin was put on the Red Data List. Its status has gone from vulnerable to endangered. The population crashed by more than 50% in the last 30 years. At this stage Birdlife SA is the only champion for this bird and we in the Western Cape are particularly close to this problem. This matter really deserves all our efforts.

Kate Webster gave a digital presentation of the birds and their problems that she deals with in the Queenstown area. Her aims are to rehabilitate injured birds so that they can be released; to monitor the raptor and vulture populations in her area; to talk to Eskom, Telkom and landowners; to assemble data which is then disseminated to NGO's; to educate the public, schools and farmers. There are fewer than 2,000 Cape vultures left in the Eastern Cape, where 44% of vulture electrocutions on power lines occur. The majority of birds which collide with power lines are juveniles. Another problem is reservoir drowning, and there are cases of deliberate or accidental poisoning of especially conflict birds like Black Eagles accused of taking lambs. She also receives raptors that were confiscated from illegal traders, juveniles, and road casualties. At

Collywobbles, near Idutwa, there are about 80 breeding pairs left; there used to be more than 300. Their greatest problem is lack of food. There is not much livestock left in the Transkei, and medicine given to cattle and sheep make carcasses unfit for vulture food.

There is trade in Crowned Cranes (a pair can fetch between R50 000 and R60 000!) and sometimes they also end up at the rehab centre. Kate is also involved in the program to introduce Red-Billed Oxpeckers on to commercial farms in the Eastern Cape.

BLSA

There is a serious marketing strategy to increase membership numbers and raise funds, e.g. Garden Birder membership of BLSA. A billboard campaign is underway, with 20 free billboards around the country, to raise awareness of what Birdlife is doing in South Africa. Vernon showed 2 examples.

- Dr. Hannelie Smit, who specializes in biodiversity, has been appointed Conservation Divisional Manager (Oppenheimer fellow).
- Trevor Hardaker has been appointed chairman of the National Rarities committee.
- The Gill Memorial award went to Dr Alan Kemp.
- Vernon suggested the Forum support his nomination of Peter Steyn for this award in 2011. Any suggestions for Owl Awards for 2011 should be e-mailed to Vernon.

National Bird Week. Anne Gray and Anton Odendal reported.

The Cape Bird Club made a donation to the Goldfields Environmental Education Centre at Kirstenbosch for buses bringing children in to their Birdweek programme from under-privileged schools. CBC's sponsorship went towards bringing in learners from the Luleka Primary School.

IBA Programme

There is a need to create Regional IBA Committees. It is suggested that relevant bird clubs should take custodianship of IBA's and do an annual assessment. This is all about habitat conservation. If this could be achieved, 50% of IBA's would be covered. If we could save 122 IBA's, it would be of world-wide importance. Birds will be used to monitor health of habitats, and clubs will be asked to report back on the status of their IBA before every WCBF meeting. Vernon is to be e-mailed if there are people who can assist. In the pipeline is a prospective workshop, where BLSA IBA Co-ordinator Daniel Marnewick will give guidelines on how to monitor specific IBA's. IBA's can be used to involve the community, e.g. schools and big companies. Keith Harrison reported that Cape Nature is setting up Estuary Monitoring Committees. As IBA's and RAMSAR sites have no legal status, it is important to get these areas protected.

SABAP2

Is alive and well, with the Western Cape well in the lead with 6,000 cards filed. We are 1,626 cards ahead of the nearest other province.

CONSERVATION

Wind Parks: there are 11 known wind parks on the West Coast in various stages of authorization. These should be watched, as some developers are taking short-cuts with EIA's. All mitigating powers should be applied. Redundant Scandinavian technology is being dumped on us, and there are too many applications to handle. BLSA is looking at a protocol for which a process is underway with the help of RSPB. There will be a workshop in August where Dr Rowena Langston will be present. Shaun O. suggests that information should be sent to smaller municipalities who might allow wind farms without knowing that they should not do so.

Mining: Moutonshoek has changed status from an application to mine to an application to explore. A decision to object cannot be made until there is an application to mine. WCBF has objected to any operation

in the future which may lead to harming the Verlorenvlei IBA. The mining threat to the Winelands is gone for now as the application has been withdrawn.

House Crows: House crows: 4 successful strikes have taken place at which between 700 and 1,000 crows per strike were eliminated.

West Coast:

- Langebaan - Shark Bay: EIA being sent to Province with some conflicting comments re biosphere ideals. WCBCB objects to project, urban edge.
- Salamander Bay: DPW had to pay a fine to DEA of R93 000.
- Harbour: RO plant has been passed, with considerable concern from scientists. Harbour to increase iron ore exports to 60MTA without EIA because there will be no additional infrastructure; applying for Air Quality Licence at district level.
- Trekoskraal: progressing to EIA.
- Vlaminkvlei: progressing to draft EIA; also questions about urban edge.
- De Plaat: progressing to EIA. All development above the 100-year flood line, so will not affect the birds.

A proposal re EIA's was put forward for a separate meeting on conservation issues, to which Cape Nature, SanParks, Cape Biosphere and other interested parties should be invited, as the current format of WCBCF does not allow enough time for conservation issues to be properly addressed.

Seabird Festival: Scheduled for either the week of 4-8 Oct or 11-15 Oct - to be held at Iziko Museum Queen Victoria Street. Lectures will be scheduled for Monday, Wednesday & Friday evenings followed by cheese & wine functions (If anybody can assist with finding sponsors for wine and cheese, please contact Anne Gray.) Photographic competition of seabirds and coastal birds planned. Waiting to get a quote from the Iziko booking department. Limited to 105 persons per evening as that is the capacity of the TH Barry Theatre.

Seabird Division: Ross Wanless asked for (and received) R500 000 from the Lotto to take tourists to Cape Point during the World Cup period. This will be a fundraising effort for the Seabird Division. There are plans to involve the Volvo Yacht Race with the Seabird Division to put a "green face" on their marketing.

Birding Routes Western Cape: Anton Odendal reports that there is a new checklist for the 7 different birding routes in the Overberg area. There was high attendance for the "Flight for Birders" course, especially from Cape Nature staff. Sponsorship from TrueCape highly appreciated. Peninsula Birding is up and running, Training of guides is going ahead.

Birding Bash at Cape Point: Planned for 2011, something similar to the West Coast Wader Bash, in co-operation with SanParks.

Biodiversity Expo-Harold Porter: Held on 28-29 May. Cape Bird Club stand visited by Grade 6 to 8 learners from Kleinmond & Hermanus schools, who showed great interest in the bird display material. Also good attendance by members of the public, mainly from the surrounding area, but also from Cape Town and other parts of the Overberg.

Kirstenbosch Biodiversity Expo: Held from 25-28 March. Kirstenbosch invited approximately 38 schools, of which they transported 14 schools to the venue. Learners from 26 schools visited the Cape Bird Club stand during the Thursday and Friday. On Saturday, Cubs & Boy Scout groups attended and members of the public and on. Sunday morning mainly families. There was a programme of music, a play and videos and a talk on Climate Change by Dr Guy Midgeley on Sunday afternoon. Follow up work distributing Bird of the Year posters to the schools that visited the CBC stand is ongoing. The Kirstenbosch Biodiversity Expo

attendance has increased tremendously over the last three years and provides an awareness and knowledge and the need for on-going conservation work.

FINANCES

- R25,000 incoming from BLSA Avitourism Division for training of bird guides in the Western Cape.
- Brian Dennis reports R7,000 annual allocation for WCBF funds has been received from BLSA.
- Balance now on hand R8,709.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

NEXT MEETING: Saturday, 09 October 2010, 9.30am for 10am, at Durbanville Nature Reserve.