

# **Western Cape Birding Forum**

**Now represents 8 clubs with more than 2,000 members in the Western Cape.**

Below are the minutes from the Meeting on 8 October 2005, at the **Municipal Boardroom, Stanford.**

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**John Carter**, chaired the Meeting, and welcomed extended to Jan Fourie, Chairman of the Board of Management, BLSA.

**Sylvia Ledgard** – Minutes.

## **Those Present**

**Cape Bird Club** – Peter Brunwin, Anne Gray, Sylvia Ledgard.

**Tygerberg Club** – Dirk van Driel.

**Somerset West Bird Club** – John Carter, Brian Dennis, Ian Farrar, Jill Mortimer.

**West Coast Bird Club** – Monika Forner

**BirdLife Walker Bay** – Paul Slabbert.

**BLSA** – Jan Fourie.

## **Apologies**

Mike Ford, Mariana Delport, Keith Harrison, Leslie Teare, Vernon Head, Brian Van der Walt, Dave Whitelaw.

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Minutes of previous meeting (28/05/2005): **Agreed**

## **Additional items for Agenda**

- Hazardous Waste Site, West Coast
- Kite surfers on Langebaan lagoon

## **BLSA MATTERS (Jan Fourie)**

### **National Bird Week 2006 (first week May)**

The suggested bird of the year for 2006 is the Helmeted Guineafowl, as this is recognisable throughout the country. The philosophy is to reach the whole of the South African community, with special emphasis on Schools. NBW has the full backing of the Minister of Education. The department is looking for a practical aspect for the ecological content of the school curriculum. A final plan will be ready by the end of this year and will be distributed to all branches/clubs.

### **Birding Big Day 2005**

BBD takes place as usual over the last weekend of November 26-27, but will also run over the following weekend 3-4 December to cater for birders who will be absent on the Mega Pelagic Indian Ocean trip over the November dates. A feature of this year's event is the "300 Challenge"; calling on top BBD teams to beat last year winners, the Rubber Duck's record of 293 species and achieve the target 300. In the Western Cape and Karoo, which are not as species rich as some regions, teams are asked to set their own targets and challenge other teams in the area to achieve those targets. BBD is a major fund raising event for BLSA and Jan urged the clubs to forego their fun birding days and encourage participation instead in the national event. This year, funds raised will go to the Cape Parrot Project

*(Comment: Dirk van Driel: Additional categories for entry are needed, in particular novice categories, to encourage new birders to get involved.)*

## **Birding Big Year**

A proposal is being developed to launch Birding Big Year in South Africa in 2006. The event will emulate the competitive birding challenge promoted by three Canadians in North America and followed by their book "The Big Year". It is hoped to bring one or more of the authors to South Africa to promote the event. Participants will start their lists at zero. The top birders in the year will go into a team to beat the world record. Participant progress will be reported on an interactive website. Individuals and teams will be included.

*(Comment: John Carter. Not everyone would be in a position to go national with this event. Consideration should be given to entry also at local or regional level.)*

## **S.A. Bird Atlas II (SABAP)**

At a first strategy workshop held in October, agreement was reached to proceed with the project in 2006. The system will be much the same as before, but grid size in the urban environment will be mostly 3' x 3'. An abundance rating will be an additional feature. GPS readings taken from specific points will be preferred, where feasible.

### **Summary of decisions taken:**

**Ownership:** BLSA will take ownership of the Atlas

- The project will be focused in South Africa only (including Lesotho and Swaziland).

### **Project Partners:**

- BirdLife International and RSPB
- SANBI (South African Biodiversity Institute), the overall governing body for the implementation of the South African Biodiversity Act and NEMA. SANBI has been mandated by the Government to monitor all spheres of South African biodiversity and is seeking to forge partnerships with specialist organisations.
- DEAT
- PFIAO & ADU

**Executing Agency:** ADU will collate the data.

### **Project Subsets:**

- SA Rarities
- SAFRING, CAR, BIRP, CWAC
- AGRED will be invited to participate.
- There will be a Seabird subset, thus extending the Bird Atlas beyond land.
- Red Data Book birds

### **Participation**

- Members of BLSA and Bird Clubs generally

- Role players from all sectors of the community  
Registration will be necessary, but barriers to entry will be minimised, so as to take birding to the people and involve all sectors of the community in the biodiversity of South Africa. An education programme will be introduced to educate and train people in bird identification and a filter/vetting system established for scientific authorisation and verification of data.

### **Data Collection**

- Spatial monitoring will be the preferred method, using where appropriate a 3'X 3' grid but applying a more flexible approach in rural areas, where a 3' grid may not be the best option. Proposed grid sizes must be compatible with previous dimension grids. One card for each grid square will be used.
- Weekly or longer lists will be preferred, but daily lists will be acceptable or even more than one list in a day to cater for the abundance factor.
- Manual recording and paper submissions.
- Other options available are GPS and PDA recording.
- World Birdwatch is another tool that could be used for recording data
- Approved standard systems of recording will be agreed for the project.

### **Data Verification**

- This will be achieved by electronic filtering of data and generating an aggregated vetting report. Verification will be tiered and devolved from national to regional level, with the same system of verification used by all.

### **Accessibility**

The project will be on a computer database system that is accessible to all. Time Frame for **Publication of SABAP II:** – 5 years.

**Sponsorship:** Three possible funders in mind.

*(Comment: John Carter. The question of the cost of fuel for remote areas may be a problem)*

### **National Rarities Committee**

Discussion of National Rarities came up in the context of the SABAP II workshop. It is viewed as essential that data on SA rarities be integrated into the Atlas. Key to this is that Regional Rarities committees are up and running and that all regions are using the same data collection, recording and vetting systems, in readiness for the establishment of a National Committee by March 2006. The Kwazulu-Natal Rarities committee constitution has been circulated and it is suggested that this be adopted by all Branches as the standard for setting up their Regional Committees. BirdLife Northern Gauteng has developed an electronic system for data collection. CBC already has an electronic model. Workshops will be held to establish a national model and the formation of a National Rarities committee.

*(Comment: John Carter. There is already a de facto rarities reporting system operating through Trevor Hardaker.)*

### **IBA's**

Most IBA's in South Africa (80%) are under Provincial control. Money is available for eco funding, but Local Municipalities, who are responsible for their upkeep, lack management capacity and do not take the issue seriously. Good IBA's are deteriorating.

Possible EU Funding: It will cost R80-million to fund our IBA's. The CEO of the European Union has indicated that Brussels is wanting to fund training and job creation within the IBA's and they are looking to put that money through BLSA.

### **Conservation League Membership**

BLSA has introduced a new Conservation League Membership category, which is open to ordinary BirdLife members, who wish to contribute to the Society's conservation goals and philosophy. In addition, Branches have been asked to nominate influential members of society (political, government, business, communications, etc.) for one year's complimentary Conservation League membership. These would be people who could use their influence to advance the goals of BLSA and support the interests of conservation in this country. Senior black members should be sought. BLO put forward 12 nominations and CBC five. All have been approved and BLSA will send invitation packages to be handed over personally to the nominees.

Conservation League Membership Categories:

BLSA Crane member (annual fee R1,200);  
BLSA Stork member (annual fee R900);  
LSA Turaco member (annual fee R600);  
BLSA Jacana member (annual fee R300).

### **Bequests**

Some 30 people have signed bequests to BLSA. The purpose of this funding will be to promote and sustain the conservation of birds. Among avenues used to reach people, talks were given at Senior Citizens Associations.

### **Representation of Clubs on Regional Forums**

Western Cape Bird Clubs: Currently, 8 branches/clubs are represented on the WCBF, namely Cape Bird Club, Tygerberg Bird Club, Somerset West Bird Club, BirdLife Worcester, Hermanus Bird Club, BirdLife Overberg, BirdLife Walker Bay and West Coast Bird Club. Jan proposed that all clubs in the geographical area of the Western Cape be invited to participate in Forum meetings or at the least to attend the annual meeting and Bird Fair at Stanford. The principle was to make birding in the Western Cape as inclusive as possible.

Co-opting Members from Other Communities: BLSA is working on expanding and broadening the Society's connections by co-opting influential members from the black community to the Board of Management, to make BOM more representative of the demographics of the country. Jan suggested that Regional Forums pursue the same policy and seek influential members from the black and other communities, who could be invited to attend Forum meetings.

### **FINANCES (Brian Dennis)**

Brian acknowledged with thanks BLSA's contribution of R7,000 per annum to facilitate the convening of Forum meetings.

**Financial Arrangements:** The WCBF account will be run from the account of Somerset West Bird Club. Brian Dennis will act as Treasurer and John Carter and Ben Kakebeeke will have alternate signing powers. Accounts for WCBF will be maintained separately from the business of SWBC.

- Funds will be used for venue hire, refreshments, travel and any other costs reasonably incurred for meetings.
- Reimbursement of travel expenses will be on the basis of R0.80 per klm for one vehicle, travelling from the club's home base to the meeting venue.
- Payments for travel and venue costs will normally be made in cash at each meeting. The Treasurer should be advised of claims by e-mail at least one week in advance.
- Financial Summary: A summary of the finances of WCBF will be made after the end of each calendar year.
- Any funds unspent at the end of a calendar year will be carried forward in the WCBF account, unless requested otherwise by BLSA.

*(Note: Brian suggested that a surplus carried forward at year-end could possibly be utilised for special projects, as agreed by the Forum. Jan expressed reservations on this point, as it was not in line with the purpose for which the funds were allocated. He suggested that at this stage the Forum should concentrate rather on facilitating attendance at meetings, especially as clubs further afield would be encouraged to participate.)*

### **CLEAN MARINE PROJECT (Anton Odendal)**

"The Clean Marine Project" was formally launched at the Stanford Bird Fair. Members of Dyer Island Cruises and BirdLife Overberg have initiated the campaign. The objective is to develop a sustainable programme to combat the negative impacts of marine littering on an on-going basis. A pilot project is being launched along the Overstrand coastline and will be used to develop a model that could be applied to other coastal municipalities in the Western Cape and later to the rest of the South African coastline. BirdLife Walker Bay, CapeNature and the Overstrand Municipality are partners in the initiative. The project will be run from the Municipal offices. Agulhas Tourism is also likely to come in. The project will cost R350,000/year to run efficiently.

Programme implementation will involve:

- The development of educational material, which will be used for children, fishermen, ski-boat clubs, etc. The idea is to get schools and local municipalities involved. An audio-visual has been developed and brochures printed. Proceeds from the sale of the brochures will go into the initial launch of the campaign.
- Educating fishermen overall, crews and management bodies of local ski-boat clubs, owners of fishing vessels and anglers, and persuading these organisations to incorporate conservation ethics into their codes of conduct. Those who subscribe to the ethics of the project and comply with them will be able to join BLSA and use the BLSA logo on their vessels.
- Collecting litter at sea and off fishing vessels. Fishing vessels will be provided with specially designed bins or bags to facilitate the collection of marine litter at sea. The Overstrand municipality will be responsible for collecting the litter where the boats come ashore.
- Coastal clean-up campaigns. Regular clean-up campaigns will be put into operation along the Overstrand beaches, rocky shores and estuaries. The ideal will be to use the annual International Coastal Clean-up week (*normally in September*) to focus attention on the project and its aims.

### **CONSERVATION ISSUES**

#### **Representation of Clubs/WCBF on Conservation/Environmental Forums (Dirk van Driel)**

Dirk proposed that a list be compiled of who is representing WCBF/Clubs on official bodies and working committees. This will enable us to organise ourselves more effectively. We need to identify where we are currently represented and where representation is still needed at forum/club or other level. Agreed that we will proceed with this. Members are asked to send details to Sylvia.

Action: Forum members

*(Noted that Dave Whitelaw had contacted Dirk with a view to his representing the Forum on the Berg River Monitoring committee).*

Jan indicated that if the Forum is able to address issues timeously at provincial level, BLSA at an early stage could try to influence at national level.

### **Silting up of Estuaries in Western Cape (Dirk van Driel)**

Estuaries constitute one of the most important habitats in the Western Cape. These are shrinking because of development. People are building right on the edges. When flooding occurs, they contact the municipalities who open up the river mouths. Sand comes in, gradually changing the topography. Farmers and municipalities plough right into the estuaries. There is a need to educate the authorities.

Jan noted that C.A.P.E., an initiative funded by WWF, was one of the organs that could become involved. He suggested that contact be made with Dr. Cas Hamman to stress concerns. To make headway with Government, the more people who made their voices heard, the more it counted.

- Dirk to draft a letter/paper to the Minister, with a copy to BLSA for the Director to take up with DEAT.

Action: Dirk

### **Registering WCBF with DEAT**

Jan recommended that every Regional Forum register with the Department of Environment and Tourism as an Interested Party, so that they can receive input and be advised of proposed developments.

Action: Dave

### **House Crows (update from Dave Whitelaw)**

CapeNature and City Council have indicated willingness to get involved. We will need R400,000 over 5 years to fund the project. Guy Preston (Working for Water) has submitted a funding application for R100,000 to initiate the programme in Cape Town and environs and Dave has prepared applications which are being forwarded to the Global Environment Fund and RSPB. BLSA is supporting and partnering the initiative.

### **4X 4's on Beaches (Peter Brunwin)**

Amended regulations enabling the reintroduction of 4 X 4's on beaches within marine reserves in the guise of angling competitions has been brought to BLSA's attention. Peter asked Forum members to keep an eye open for any aberrations and report these to BLSA, so that the Director can take up the issue at national level. Evidence is needed from Clubs.

### **Proposed Steenberg Road Extension (Peter Brunwin)**

City Council is supporting the developer Capricorn's application for the construction of the Steenberg Road extension. The given purpose is to create improved access for business. The route proposed is the same as the final section of the proposed R300 and would go through Zandvlei. The scoping and public participation process continues in early 2006.

### **Black Eagles at Vredenburg (per Keith Harrison)**

Keith thanked WCBF for support received in connection with the potential ecological impact arising from the shopping centre to be developed at Vredenburg. To the original EIA will be added:

- the breeding Black Eagles

- the perennial wetland, in that no run-off must go into it
- the sensitivity of the flora
- other issues relative to security, and extension of the "green" area.

#### **Hazardous Waste Site (per Keith Harrison)**

Keith has asked for concerted assistance from WCBF to oppose the development of a site to take H:H forms of hazardous waste (excluding nuclear and medical) within the Saldahna Bay municipal area. The proposed site is about 5kms from the Berg River and the fear is that any run-off of gaseous pollution would move towards the Lower Berg River wetlands. BLSA has registered as an interested and affected party. Charles Reynolds, who has spent 23 years in hazardous waste management internationally, will head up local objection. The over-riding concern is the selection of the site but, added to this, is a general concern regarding the capacity of the authorities to operate and monitor sites of this type.

Dirk van Driel: In response to an enquiry from Keith as to whether any members of the Forum had attended the workshops for managing hazardous waste in the Western Cape, Dirk indicated that he had attended several meetings of the environmental interest forum. The problem was that the Western Cape was running out of space for H:H waste and transportation over great distances was impossibly costly. If sites were not created, dumping would occur anywhere. Dirk posed the question whether Keith was convinced that a site in the Velddrif area would affect the wetland, given the fact that the waste would be sealed and buried 5kms down. Dirk was not himself totally convinced.

#### **West Coast National Park/Langebaan (Monika Forner)**

Noted:

- Kite surfers: The uncontrolled activity of kite surfers at Langebaan was creating a hazard and serious disturbance to birds, animals and people all along the lagoon. Kite surfers had even been seen intruding into the bay alongside the Geelbek hide. WCBF to register a complaint with the Kite Surfing Association.
- Canoes: WCNP had granted a licence to run canoes in sites where Black Harriers breed.

#### **WCNP BIG BIRDING DAY (4th and 5th November 2005)**

Proceedings are well advanced for the hosting of this event by the Honorary Rangers in West Coast National Park. A full programme of activities is planned. Monika expressed reservations regarding WCNP's readiness to handle the event, in particular the primitive accommodation on offer. BLSA is backing the initiative.

#### **OTHER MATTERS**

##### **Sponsorship of Hides-WCNP (Anne Gray)**

Sponsorship is going forward for additional hides in West Coast National Park. The cost of the proposed saltmarsh hide is R160,000. The Honorary Rangers are raising funds for repairs on the Geelbek hides, with WWF having undertaken to take care of any additional funding required (+/-R85,000).

##### **List of Wetlands (John Carter)**

Helderberg Conservation Forum has received a request from DEAT to assist with a project which is underway to compile an inventory of wetlands in the Western Cape. Percy Fitzpatrick Institute is involved. Colleen Seymour is the contact person there.

##### **WCBF Meetings**

Agreed that WCBF will meet three times annually. Meeting dates will be scheduled in February, June and October, with the October meeting convened at Stanford to coincide with the Stanford Bird Fair.

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**DATE OF NEXT MEETING:** Saturday 25 February 2006, at 12h00, Helderberg Nature Reserve  
Environmental Centre, Somerset West.