

Western Cape Birding Forum

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

Meeting at Hermanus on Saturday, 06 October 2012.

Vernon Head - Chaired the Meeting.

Sylvia Ledgard - Minutes.

Present

Cape Bird Club: Vernon Head, Sylvia Ledgard, Anne Gray, Joan Ackroyd.

Somerset West Bird Club: John Carter, Brian Dennis, Jill Mortimer, Freya Brett, Denise Rizzo.

BirdLife Walker Bay: Royd Frith, Elsa Gebhard, Peter Hochfelden, Peter Hood, Dave de Beer.

Hermanus Bird Club: Barbara Palmer, Keith Brooke-Sumner, Lee Berman.

Somerset West Bird Club: Brian Dennis, Sakkie Krynauw, Denise Rizzo, Caroline Crump.

Tygerberg Bird Club: Gerald Wingate.

West Coast Bird Club: Keith and Rena Harrison.

BirdLife Overberg: Anton Odendal, Carin Malan.

BLSA: Dale Wright (Regional Conservation Manager, Western Cape), Samantha Ralston (Birds & Renewable Energy Manager), Shireen Gould (Membership Manager).

SABAP2: Peter Nupen

SANParks: Mike and Jenny Lodge (Cluster Hon. Rangers - Western Cape).

1. RECORD OF NOTE. BirdLife Overberg - 10th Birthday: The meeting was held at Hermanus by invitation of BirdLife Overberg on the occasion of their 10th birthday.

Chairman Vernon Head extended thanks and congratulations to BLO on the achievement of this milestone. BLO Chairman Anton Odendal welcomed WCBF to Hermanus and presented an overview of the Club's achievements and activities during the 10 years.

2. BIRDLIFE OVERBERG - 10 Years (Anton Odendal)

BLO was formed during 2002 with the following aims:

- To enable people in the Overberg with an interest in birds to become involved in bird-watching activities by participating in the typical activities associated with BirdLife South Africa and its international partners.
- To place a strong emphasis on educational programmes in order to get participants involved in the meaningful conservation of birds and their habitats.
- To market the Overberg and Western Cape as a top birding destination.

Comments arising:

- Golf days as fund-raising events for conservation: R130,000 has been raised in three events organised by BLO. AO proposes that WCBF organises a golf day to raise funds for Dale Wright's conservation work in the Western Cape.
- Educational Brochures - affordable birding resources for children. Four introductory bird identification brochures have been published covering the common birds of the Western Cape with text highlighting a conservation message and specific to a distinct habitat type - Waterbirds, Shorebirds, Fynbos and Garden. The challenge is to get the brochures into schools and expose as many children in the Western Cape as possible to the material. AO appeals to the bird clubs to support the initiative by seeking sponsorship for the printing and using club funds to distribute to local schools in

their areas. There is an opportunity for individual branding as the logos on the brochures can be changed with individual runs.

- Birding Routes and Website: Five birding routes feature on the website - Overberg, Cape West Coast (Flamingo route), Cape Winelands, Central Karoo, Eden (Garden Route & Klein Karoo). The Cape Metro route is in the planning stage. Birding brochures have been published for each of the established routes. Trip reports attract 62% of visits to the website. Trip reports needed: articles, especially trip reports, to be forwarded, so as to build up an information bank for visitors and establish the Western Cape as a key birding destination. Note: Web pages on the site can be duplicated for other clubs.
- The Knersvlakte is a great destination for birds in the Western Cape and a birding route would add value.

3. BIRDS & RENEWABLE ENERGY APPOINTMENT (Samantha Ralston).

This is a BirdLife South Africa appointment. The position is funded by Investec. Sam presented an introductory overview of her objectives and focus for the next year. BLSA supports renewable energy and is committed to work with the industry to:

- Avoid, minimise and mitigate potential impacts on bird species and their habitats.
- Accurately assess the impacts and promote informed decision-making.
- Ensure scientifically rigorous monitoring.
- Gather comparable data across South Africa.
- Improve ability to predict and resolve impacts.
- Consider impacts on-going throughout the life cycle of a project

Potential impacts of Wind and Solar Energy facilities on Birds

- Mortality - collision with wind turbines/solar energy infrastructure.
- Displacement - through loss of habitat.
- Disturbance - scaring birds away from their roosting, nesting or feeding sites.

The processes that Sam will be involved in are:

Wind Energy

(1) Project Planning

The Avian Wind Sensitivity Map provides an indication of the geographic areas in South Africa where the possible establishment of wind farms might have a negative impact on birds and gives an indication of the likely risk and sensitivity of an area.

• Sam's job is to promote the use of the map in the early stages of project planning and in spatial plans, support users in interpretation of data and gather information for updates (monitoring data).

(2) Decision Making and Impact Assessment

Requirements are detailed in Best Practice Guidelines for Avian Monitoring and Impact Assessment. The aim is to ensure that there is sufficient information on which to base an informed decision.

- Sam's job is to draft simple Terms of Reference for avifaunal specialist assessments and promote their uptake in EIAs through engagement with DEA, provinces, specialists, financiers and other stakeholders; keep a spatial database of all developments to help identify cumulative impacts; draft recommended conditions of approval.

(3) Monitoring

Requirements are detailed in Best Practice Guidelines. The aim is to inform impact assessment and project design pre-construction, improve understanding of the impacts on birds, inform any additional mitigation that may be required post construction. The Guidelines have been endorsed by BLSA, EWT, ESKOM and the Industry but the challenge is to get endorsement and backing from Government.

- Sam's job is to ensure that monitoring gets done and complies with best practice, encourage the implementation of additional mitigation if required, centrally house all monitoring reports to facilitate regional assessments of impacts and use relevant findings to improve future products and decisions.

Solar Energy.

- Sam's job is to finalise guidelines for assessing impacts on birds for solar facilities and encourage the uptake of guidelines through comments on EIAs and engagement with stakeholders.

In general, Sam's brief is to:

- Ensure that BirdLife South Africa is at the cutting edge of knowledge with regard to monitoring, mitigation, etc.
- Act as spokesperson for BLSA on birds and renewable energy issues.
- Establish a library.
- Develop a spatial database of developments.
- Support African partners.
- Actively engage with problem cases (e.g. Lesotho).

Bird Clubs can help by:

- Gathering information (e.g. SABAP2) to feed into sensitivity map.
- Commenting on EIAs, using local knowledge.
- Voluntary monitoring (e.g. My Birdpatch).
- Keeping BLSA informed of local developments.

Question: Will Sam be involved with other development applications, e.g. nuclear? No, Dale as Reg. Conservation Manager would take these up.

4. WIND FARM DEVELOPMENTS - WEST COAST (Keith Harrison).

Points covered:

- Defined width of internal roads for turbine sites.
- Hopefield: National Parks involvement.
- Saldahna: Test site for SA manufactured turbine blades.
- Renewable energy applications that have passed the second Eskom bid.
- Clover Valley site split into two applications.

5. CONSERVATION & IBA UPDATE

(1) Regional Conservation Progress Report-Western Cape (Dale Wright)

The report covers:

- IBA strategy document.
- IBA assessments.
- Awareness activities.
- Partnerships.
- Funding.
- Other projects.

Additional notes:

1) Funding of Regional Conservation Programme: Dale has operational funding to do the work but not for conservation projects. Sustainable funding is needed to ensure the position on-going.

2) Funding of IBAs: Knysna Toyota sponsorship of vehicles. BLSA has received very generous sponsorship of two Toyota Hilux single cab vehicles from Knysna Toyota. One will be used to support IBA project work in the Western and Eastern Cape and the other in the Seabird Division.

3) Stewardship: We are partnering with WESSA for a stewardship programme at Verlorenvlei estuary and Olifants River estuary. (JL): CapeNature has commented that they do not have the capacity take up more sites. (DW): WWF and BLSA are taking up some of the gaps. The plan is to get landowners on board to sign up to a stewardship programme. Up until now, stewardship has been involved with vegetation; we now need stewardship for IBAs.

4) Biodiversity and Wine Initiative: Looking for partnership with WWF and BWI which will involve workshops with wine farm management and tasting staff. The objective is to create biodiversity awareness and explore practical management options for farmers to provide habitat for birds on wine farms. The programme could then be rolled out to other agricultural sectors.

5) Fynbos Forum: Dale met with the Fynbos Forum at Cape St. Francis. The Fynbos Forum is an affiliation of researchers, managers, landowners and other stakeholders which meets annually to discuss management issues and research results. Its mission is to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainability of Fynbos ecosystems. BLSA's aim is to raise the profile of birds and bird conservation in Fynbos within this partnership and the importance of birds as pollinators for many Fynbos species of plants. The mountain and lowland Fynbos is a complex system and BLSA is determined to ensure that the area's birds are adequately protected by IBAs.

(2) Terms of Reference - Regional Conservation Committee: With the advent of Regional Conservation Managers, it has become necessary to re-formulate the role of Regional IBA steering committees . Terms of Reference have been finalised.

(3) False Bay Ecology Park/Strandfontein (IBA SA116)

(a) IBA pilot site: Grant Thornton has drafted a corporate funding proposal. There are corporate benefits and we will be looking for a corporate that can be linked to the site. The City has granted naming rights.

(b) Ramsar site: The application for the False Bay Coastal Belt to be registered as a Ramsar site has been completed. This will become a Nature Reserve.

(c) Reserve Manager: Erica Essig has been appointed at Strandfontein. It is planned to get students involved with research projects and to create events for the IBA. Horse-drawn tourist birding is an idea.

6. IBA NATIONAL PROGRAMME

(1) IBA Resources (Dale Wright).

The following have been completed:

- IBA Conservation Strategy Document: This will be the programme's conservation programme for years to come.
- IBA Directory: The text of all 124 IBAs, as published in the IBA Directory (Barnes 1998), has been uploaded on the BLSA website. As assessments are completed, the texts, species and conservation actions planned at each IBA will be updated.

Comments

(PN): It is suggested that atlasing pentads are tied into IBAs.

(DWr): Everything in BLSA is developed around and feeds into IBAs. Bird clubs are encouraged to adopt and develop a relationship with IBAs in their area. Next year, local conservation groups will be formed to help drive projects and funding.

(2) IBA Fundraising Initiatives (Vernon Head)

- Application for funding: BLSA's IBA Programme funding application was shortlisted with Mitsui & Co. (Note: Notification has been received that BLSA's funding application was successful. This funding over the next two years will enable the IBA Programme to complete a comprehensive review of the IBA network.)
- IBA Golf Day: The BLSA Golf Day will take place at the Royal, Johannesburg & Kensington Golf Club on 17 October. The event will be in support of the IBA programme to raise funds for:
- Training community bird guides and bird clubs in the monitoring of IBAs.
- Completing ecological assessments of IBAs.
- Providing environmental education to schools in the vicinity of IBAs.
- Implementing conservation action at priority IBAs to address threats facing species and habitats at these sites.

We need to develop a golfing strategy for fundraising events. Golf is a huge outdoor activity with great marketing opportunities for IBAs.

7. SABAP2 (Western Cape update by Peter Nupen).

(1) National: The project has completed five years of data submission and analysis. During this time 1,096 observers have participated, uploading 76,315 Full Protocol Cards (FPCs). This is a remarkable Citizen Science achievement. To date, of the 17,218 pentads which cover the whole country, 11,073 have at least one FPC, which equates to 63.94% coverage of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland. Of concern, however, is that there has been a drop-off of more than 50% in the number of atlasers over the five years, with only 461 participating in 2012. Paradoxically, however, the number of FPC submissions continues to increase per annum. Club chairpersons are asked to encourage their members to submit lists of bird species seen on any bird outing.

Action: Clubs.

(2) Western Cape: In the Western Cape, 1,529 of 1,837 pentads have at least one FPC, equating to 82.7% coverage of the region, 1,116 have at least two FPCs (60.8% coverage) and 485 have at least 4 FPCs (26.4% coverage). This level of coverage is now available for rigorous statistical analysis concerning the conservation of wild bird species in the Western Cape.

- The 3DDG Challenge covered the six most south-westerly Full Degree Squares in the Western Cape and ran for a year, ending in September. A total of 327 FPCs was submitted specifically for this Challenge and 116 new pentads turned "green" (a minimum of four FPC submissions for each

pentad). This means that all nine pentads on 13 new 1:50,000 (Quarter Degree Square) maps turned “green”, i.e. 75% coverage achieved in 12 months.

- New Challenge: The steering committee is prioritising pentads and asking individual atlasers to volunteer to tackle these priority sites. Once they are accounted for, a new set of pentads will be prioritised.

8. WEST COAST UPDATE (Keith Harrison)

(1) Verlorenvlei:

- Test site for revised Water Act.
- EMF Framework.
- Reed control.
- Public access.
- Saldahna-Sishen railway line.
- Moutonshoek: Tungsten mining application for prospecting.

(2) Berg River Wetlands:

- SA Ramsar Committee accepts original paperwork.
- Estuary Forum fills role of Management Authority.

(3) WCNP and Islands:

- Application for two Salmon Farming Rafts near Jutten and Marcus islands.
- Parks Board offices moved to the “Langebaan gate”.

(4) Dassen Island:

- Protected Areas Association Committee formed.
- Other Points:
 - (1) Rocher Pan site now open.
 - (2) Saldahna IDZ-application for plant to produce Chlorine Caustic Soda and Hydrochloric Acid.
 - (3) Cape Nature Stewardship programme.
 - (4) North/South corridor from WCNP to Blaauwberg.
 - (5) EIA in for upgrading of sand road from Grotto Bay to Darling Hills.

9. SPECIES CONCERNS

(1) Pied Crows: Position Statement (Dale Wright): The increase in the abundance of Pied Crows in the Western Cape and the potential threat they may represent to other indigenous bird species and biodiversity in general has been raised at Forum level. Certain websites have been coming to the fore advertising services to kill Pied Crows and other perceived “problem” predators and there is a concern that some farmers may be using poison. BirdLife South Africa is not in favour of this approach and does not support the control or poisoning of indigenous Corvid species. It holds to the principle that sound scientific research is needed to determine the level of threat before control programmes can be considered. A six months’ student project is being undertaken at the Fitz and it is hoped to extend this to a full Masters project.

(2) Bird Collisions on Power Lines (Anne Gray): A report was received that Blue Cranes and Herons were being killed on power lines in the Rawsonville farming area because the bird deterrent flappers were falling off. Kobus Graaff took this up with Eskom in the area and received assurance that they had stock of the

flappers and would replace the faulty ones. To date, nothing has been done. AG will follow up with Kobus and make contact also with Constant Hoogstadt at EWT who is knowledgeable on the subject.

- Comment (PN): The current flappers are not serviceable but Eskom is not doing any new work at present on preventative deterrents. SA Plastics could be approached to help solve the problem.

(3) Pelican Watch, Langebaan (Mike Lodge): The 2012 pelican watch on Jutten and Malgas Islands starts now and goes through to mid-January. The project is managed by West Coast Hon. Rangers and is aimed at alleviating the disastrous effects on the breeding success of Cape Cormorants on Jutten Island and Cape Gannets on Malgas Island caused by the predation of Great White Pelicans on their hatchlings.

10. SEABIRD DIVISION

Atlantic and Indian Ocean Pac3 Project (VH): Ross Wanless reports that the SA Albatross Task Force team has submitted its final report to Packard on the Pac3 project, which has stretched over four years. This is an international success story and something to be proud of.

11. BLSA EVENTS / PROJECTS (Vernon Head)

(1) SOS 2012 and National Marine Week (8 -14 Oct.): The SOS (Save our Seabirds) festival is now an established national event, taking place annually in National Marine Week. Now in its 4th year, it has become the biggest environmental festival in the world. The focus this year is the importance of the Southern Ocean. The festival aims to educate people about the threats to our oceans and marine diversity while inspiring the public to make a difference. There will be a double-page spread in the Argus, advertisements in all newspapers, interviews, and the DSTV weather channel will be branded for SOS and carry a marine message throughout the week. The festival runs in partnership with the Department of Environmental Affairs and Iziko Museums, with significant support this year from The Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust (BOE Private Clients). Up until now, National Marine Week and the SOS festival have been in Cape Town. Next year, it will go national along the coastline. It could be attached for instance to the Stanford Bird Fair. The Government has funding. What needs to be done is for local areas to consider how best to build the message into a programme of events for their area and take this to Government for funding.

Comments

- (JL): The West Coast Fossil Park, together with the West Coast Bird Club, has a fun day of events in support of SOS 2012.
- (KH): WCBC is working on a programme for 2013 in context of the local region and will seek advice from VH on how to package this to take to Government for funding.

(2) Hourglass advertisements. Screening on ETV starts this week and will continue for a number of months. Suggestion (ML): Consider enabling members to embed the hourglass images or alternatively a bird/s synonymous with their region into private emails, so as to spread the conservation message. VH will take the idea to Marketing.

(3) Flock at Sea 2013 (1 - 5 March): To date, nearly 1,000 bookings have been confirmed for MSC Starlight's 4-night cruise on the Opera. This will be the biggest ever gathering of birders in Southern Africa. Peter Harrison MBE, professional birder, artist, author and screenwriter and widely considered as the world's foremost authority on seabirds, will be joining the cruise. He will be assisting with guiding and will present a number of lectures. There will be 19 seabird guides on board. Excursions are planned at Walvis Bay.

(4) Owl Awards 2012: These prestigious awards acknowledge people, organisations and companies who support BirdLife South Africa and its bird and habitat conservation work. Charles Greigg Jewellers crafted the awards. This was a "green carpet" event held at the Indaba Hotel, Johannesburg. Recipients 2012 were: (a) Owl awards: AVIS, Barbi Forsyth (Wits Bird Club), Honda, Barry Sayer (Continental Outdoor Media), Joanne Jackson (City of Cape Town), Niall Perrins, Ocean View Assoc. for People with Disabilities (bird scaring lines), Samson Mulaudzi and Christopher Nethonzhe (bird guides), Zolile Nquayi (Dept. of Environmental

Affairs); Owlet award: Kayla Boix-Witts; (c) Eagle-Owl awards: Gaynor Rupert and Graham Warsop (The Jupiter Drawing Room).

(5) BLSA Magazine African Birdlife: The first edition of the new magazine will be launched this month with a print-run of 10,000 copies. All costs for the first year will be covered and all advertising space has been sold for the same period. The Editor is Eve Gracie and the Designer Bryony Van Wyk (from Africa Birds & Birding, following the termination of that magazine).

12. CONGRATULATIONS. WCBF records congratulations to:

(1) Anne Gray, who was nominated by WESSA at their 64th AGM as an Environmental Champion in recognition of over 25 years of dedicated voluntary work with the Cape Bird Club and her support for other environmental groups.

(2) Doug Harebottle, on the attainment of his PhD.

NEXT MEETING: Saturday, 2 February 2013, at Helderberg Environmental Centre, Somerset West.