

Western Cape Birding Forum

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

Minutes from the Meeting on 29 September 2007, at **Stanford House, Stanford**.

Vernon Head – Chaired the Meeting. Welcome was extended to all.

Sylvia Ledgard – Minutes.

Those Present

Cape Bird Club: Vernon Head, Sylvia Ledgard, Mel Tripp

BirdLife Overberg: Anton Odendal

BirdLife Stellenbosch: Willene van der Merwe

BirdLife Walker Bay: Elsa Gebhard

BirdLife Worcester: Kobus Graaff

Hermanus Bird Club: John Saunders

Somerset West Bird Club: Brian Dennis, Ben Kakebeeke, Jill Mortimer, Denise Rizzo.

Tygerberg Bird Club: Lesley Teare

West Coast Bird Club: Jan Kotze

Visitor-BLSA: Doug Newman (Membership)

Apologies

Anne Gray, Dave Whitelaw, Brigid de Kock, John Carter, John Bowman, Keith Harrison, Yvonne Weiss.

Additional Items for Agenda:

- Pelican Watch: Saldahna seabird colonies
- Lourens River Tern Roost

Minutes of Previous Meeting (9/6/2007): Accepted.

WESTERN CAPE BIRDING ROUTE (Anton Odendal). Six routes;

Cape West Coast

The route starts in Cape Town at Intaka Island and Rietvlei and proceeds along the West Coast, taking in all the important bird sites. The checklist and first poster are ready. An A2 folded brochure and map identifying key sites will be going to the printers. Map Studio has come on line in this context and will do free maps for the Province, with the proviso that the maps carry their logo. A further condition of their involvement is that they will develop a commercial map on birds, which they will market. Finance is being sourced from a variety of bodies, including Local and District Municipalities. We have the finance for a website that is being developed to cover the Province, with drop-down panels for each of the six routes. The 10 top birds will feature on the home page. The bird guide training plan is in hand. Vernon noted that it works well to link site guides up with local tourism bureaus, which then drive the operation. We are registering as an IDP with all local Municipalities. The West Coast Birding Route will be launched at the Riviera Hotel, Velddrif, on 9 November 2007. The steering committee is headed up by Andre Kruger.

Overberg: The launch at Hermanus, in March 2008 to coincide with the BLSA AGM.

Route 62 and Garden Route: Will start working on these from January 2008.

Winelands: May 2008 developments are proceeding well in the Ceres area. Anton has been invited to a

meeting of the Witzenberg Bird Club, which will coincide with a formal public meeting to which the tourism people will be invited. A steering committee is being set up. mooted that TBC and SWBC fall under the Winelands District Municipality, but CBC falls under Cape Town (set up a meeting to discuss).

Karoo: Currently a problem. We do not have the infrastructure, requiring the proximity of Bird Clubs. All six routes will be ready by 2010.

Noted: Jan Burger of Cape Nature, Porterville, is opening a new hide on Verlorenvlei. Lesley Teare asked that this be noted on the West Coast Birding Route.

IBA's

IBA's are areas declared as being important for birds for specific reasons, based on international criteria. This may mean the area is important for a particular species, or there may be a large congregation of several species, or a large number of one species, or most importantly one or more Red Data species in an area.

“Adopt an IBA”

Co-ordinator for Western and Northern Cape: Vernon Head.

It was agreed that Clubs will take responsibility for IBA's in the region as follows:

- **Cape Bird Club:** Strandfontein Sewage Works, Rietvlei Wetland Reserve, Boulders Bay
- **West Coast Bird Club:** West Coast NP/Saldahna Island, Lower Berg River Wetlands, Verlorenvlei
- **Witzenberg Bird Club:** (possibly) Cedarberg/Koue Bokkeveld
- **Wm. Quniton Karoo Bird Club:** (possibly) Karoo National Park, Swartberg Mountains, Anysberg NR
- **Somerset West Bird Club:** (possibly) Eastern False Bay Mountains
- **Tygerberg Bird Club:** Bot River Lagoon/Kleinmond Estuary
- **BirdLife Overberg:** Overberg Wheatbelt, Heuningnes River & Estuary
- **Lakes Bird Club:** Wilderness/Sedgefield Lakes,
- **Outeniqua Mountains:** Southern Langeberg Mountains

IBA's for which local site guides could take responsibility:

- De Hoop NR
- Dyer Island
- Robben Island
- Dassen Island
- Bird Island
- Olifants River Estuary

Applying for IBA Status: Overberg and Hermanus Bird Clubs are applying for IBA status for the Klein River Lagoon, Fernkloof and Walker Bay

IBA Workshop: Neil Smith, Manager Conservation Division BLSA, will conduct a workshop in Cape Town on IBA assessments and monitoring on Saturday, 9 February 2008, time 10am-3pm, venue Kristo Pienaar Centre (Tygerberg Nature Reserve).

SABAP2 LAUNCH –W/CAPE

Club Responses to Date: Response is slow.

- **CBC:** Instruction manual, Quick-Start Guide with specimen data sheets for handwritten recording, and electronic kit and map of Western Cape region have been made available to members, but little interest has been shown to date.
- **TBC:** Four teams have volunteered but have not started yet. TBC will be running a piece on how to get going, written by Sally Adam, in the next issue of "The Kite"
- **SWBC:** John Carter is the Club "champion". The project is off the ground, with good coverage of the area.
- **Stellenbosch:** One group underway.
- **Worcester:** A "champion" has been appointed but there is little interest so far.
- **Hermanus:** Underway, with involvement mainly of committee members. General interest minimal.
- **Overberg:** Holding over to April next year, because of concentrated effort being applied to hosting the BLSA AGM at Hermanus in March.
- **Walker Bay:** Not underway.

Appoint a "Champion": Brian Dennis indicated that the key to getting the project going in Clubs is to appoint a "champion", who can then recruit members in the area.

Workshop: Doug Harebottle will be holding a workshop on Saturday, 27 October 2007, to explain the processes of recording and submitting data, time 10am-3pm, venue Durbanville Nature Reserve.

CONSERVATION ISSUES

(1) Environmental Threats

West Coast Issues (submitted by Keith Harrison and commented on by Jan Kotze) - BLSA has identified the Cape West Coast, which is a proclaimed RAMSAR Site, as a critical migratory area that needs ongoing and close monitoring.

Langebaan: There are pressures from several projects occurring simultaneously. It has been decided that the approach should be to consider these as a single problem area. The Cape West Coast Biosphere Reserve has been put in touch with BLSA's Carolyn Ah Shene (Policy and Advocacy), who has taken the issues to BirdLife International.

Baja Sardinia: The proposed development of cluster housing in the buffer zone to the south of Langebaan between the town and the West Coast National Park has met with strong opposition from conservation bodies, including WCBF, SANParks, the S.A. National Parks Trust and the West Coast Biosphere Reserve. The proposed site is on the shore of the Langebaan lagoon at Klein Oesterwal (also known as Shark Bay). The developer Dormehl Properties has already commenced fencing off some of the entrances the public use for access to the lagoon. A map supplied from ADU files is of the original RAMSAR site and National Park before any developments and clearly shows that the proposed development is within the RAMSAR Site. Carolyn Ah Shene is having the map authenticated by the RAMSAR controlling body.

Saldahna Iron Ore Terminal Expansion: The Port Master Plan shows that the currently proposed expansion is only for the medium term period up to 2020. The plans for longer term include a Container Terminal and Ship Repair Facility in Little Bay (Saldahna). A public meeting was held on 20 September to discuss proposed options for the Ore Storage area extensions. The channel and turning circle will be deepened from the present 15 meters to 21 meters. Dredging and where to dispose of it are the major problems. The effect on the tidal flow of the Langebaan lagoon system is of concern. BLSA, with assistance from BirdLife International, will attempt to apply pressure on DEAT to comply with RAMSAR conditions.

Within this project, but subject to a separate EIA, is the requirement for a Reverse Osmosis Plant to provide 3,600 kl of fresh water daily to control dust. Concern is about pumping the brine back into Little Bay and altering the salinity. However, it was agreed that the Port of Saldahna is the only viable option for this project. Therefore, the expansion will take place and we have asked only that it takes place within the framework of existing legislation for the environment. Oil pollution is a larger and more pressing problem - contrary to official reports that the equipment and facilities in place are sufficient to protect the bay and lagoon, this has subsequently been shown not to be the case.

De Plaat, Velddrif: The revised plan for De Plaat shows that the proposed development will be above the 50-year flood line, which is what was asked for.

Vlaminkvlei: A farm at Vlaminkvlei "A" has been sold and the proposal is for a hotel and houses. The area overlooks the Little Salt River and the small saltpans and includes the "Pipe" birding spot and blue gum trees which house a mixed heronry on the Lower Berg River for breeding herons and egrets.

Vredenburg: Work has commenced on the shopping centre on the R45, but action taken by WCBF resulted in the development site being moved sufficiently to protect the wetland and rocks.

Lourens River Tern Roost: Jill Mortimer reported that AECI (Heartlands) has indicated that they are happy to retain the tern roost, but their concern is who will be responsible for it afterwards. Sonchem has not yet signed to relinquish their explosives business and this will hold up the development.

(2) Species Concerns

Pelican Watch: Marta de Ponte Machado is running an intervention programme to deter predation by pelicans of seabird eggs and hatchlings in the Saldahna breeding colonies. Attempts will be made to drive the pelicans off the islands. It is envisaged that the programme will run from mid-October to mid-January and will require the input of many man hours by volunteers. Volunteers from the WCNP Honorary Rangers will be stationed on Jutten and Malgas islands and will monitor Schaapen from the shore.

Langebaan Black Eagles: The nest with eggs was washed away during the winter. Andrew Jenkins and the Raptor Monitoring Group have erected a permanent nest platform.

Owl/Raptor Rehabilitation Centres: The matter of BLSA accreditation of rehabilitation centres for injured owls and raptors was raised as an issue to take to the next Council meeting. BLSA endorsement can mean the difference between a person being able to get local funding or not. Keith Harrison proposes that the Regional Forums vet rehabilitation centres in their areas and make recommendations to Council for BLSA endorsement, where appropriate. Jill Mortimer highlighted the plight of Eleze Kemp, who runs a hospital for owls and other raptors from a stable at her home in Tulbach, without funding from any source. Eleze has dedicated her life to the preservation of birds and to conservation in general and gives talks to schools, farmers and farm workers, dispelling myths and superstitions about these birds. Last year, she reached 33,000 children. Jill suggested that the issue of BLSA accreditation was particularly relevant, as the Bird of the Year for 2008 is the Owl. Anton noted that the current problem for BLSA is one of legality, as the principle of accreditation of rehabilitation centres is not in the constitution. This would be put on the table for discussion.

Action: Vernon

Penguins on Dyer Island: The plight of the African Penguin on Dyer Island due to lack of breeding burrows is cause for concern. The Dyer Island Conservation Trust launched a project in 2006 to raise enough funds to build 2,000 specially designed artificial burrows. Confirmation has been received that BLSA has found funding of R35,000 for the project.

Barn Swallows: A South African Government proposed airport extension (King Shaka Airport, La Mercy), to meet the demands of hosting World Cup 2010, had given rise to concern. The Mount Moreland reedbed, which would be on the aircrafts' flight path is the roosting site of three million Barn Swallows, equating to more than 8% of the European breeding population, and is designated to become an IBA. Subsequent studies have revealed that mitigating measures can be put in place. BirdLife International partner RSPB will

provide RM2 worth of sponsorship to fund permanent radar on site at the airport to monitor the flight of the swallows. It was noted that there is a long-standing roost at Durban International Airport, which has not been adversely disturbed by airport operations.

BLSA MATTERS

Tygerberg Bird Club

The Chairman congratulated TBC on the Club's acceptance as a full branch of BirdLife South Africa. TBC's alliance as full members will increase the Society's strength in advancing the cause of birds and birding in South Africa. Lesley Teare advised that the Club would adopt the BLSA constitution at the next AGM.

Membership (Doug Newman)

BLSA is actively seeking ways to expand membership numbers and make membership of the organisation more accessible. Innovative and radical changes are being proposed and will be put to Council. Black membership, Corporate, Youth and Seniors are being looked at. The Conservation League currently has 30 members, but 600 are needed. The objective is to increase BLSA's influence at national and international level by strength of numbers.

Marketing Material for Exhibitions/Functions

Doug has put in a funding proposal for marketing material for Club membership. Clubs are asked to liaise with Doug as to what they would need. Action: Clubs

National Bird Week 2008

The Bird of the Year is the Owl. Branding, posters, material, etc. will be provided. It is hoped to make available a CD on Owls free of charge. Clubs are asked to contact Sadie Wollheim.

Action: Clubs

BLSA Awards

- **Owl Award (annual):** An acknowledgement to Companies and Individuals, outside of the BirdLife family, who have given their support and sponsorship to the organisation, making it possible for BLSA to continue its conservation programmes and projects
- **Eagle Award (annual):** Awarded to Members of BLSA, who have contributed in some way to the advancement of birding knowledge in South Africa. Each Region can make three nominations.
- **Year 2007:** Recipients in the Western Cape were: (1) Anne Gray for pioneering pelagic birding off the Cape coast (now the second biggest boat-based pelagic birding industry in the world), and so raising the birding community's awareness and appreciation of our seabirds; and (2) Frank Wygold for his contribution to environmental education among school children. Single handed, Frank teaches 6,000 - 10,000 children about birds and nature every year.
- **Year 2008:** Nominations proposed by Anton Odendal and accepted by the Forum are Peter Steyn, Nico Myburgh and Cape Bird Club. Citations will be prepared and taken to Council.
- **Gill Memorial Medal:** This is the highest honour bestowed by BLSA and is normally given once in three or four years for a lifetime contribution to the knowledge of Southern African birds. Ian Sinclair will receive the award at BLSA's AGM in March 2008.

CAPE BIRD CLUB - 60TH ANNIVERSARY 2008 (Mel Tripp)

A sub-committee has been appointed to plan a programme of celebratory and social events. Mel Tripp is the Chairman.

- The programme will kick off in March with a talk by Club President Peter Steyn on "CBC Personalities over the past 60 Years".
- In May, the official anniversary month, a celebratory cocktail party will be followed by a second talk by Peter on "60 Years of Birding".

- A lunch is planned for past committee members and workers, who have contributed to running the Club.
- Two half-day courses are in the pipeline - John Graham's "60 Top Birds of the Western Cape" (April) and Anton Pauw's "Mountain of the Sea - Table Mountain" (August).
- Several camps/trips are scheduled:
- **externally**, Madagascar with Ian Sinclair (June/July) and Tanzania (Sept.);
- **internally**, Red Stone Hills and Dronfield (Kimberley).
- A "Big Birding Day" weekend will take place at West Coast National Park (before the national event),
- and the year will wrap up with a year-end party. A special label Sparkling Wine will feature. An important aspect of the year will be a Conservation Fund to raise funds for the Albatross Task Force. The Club is commissioning talented artist Neil Fouche to paint the Grey-Headed Albatross. This work will be raffled at the RSPB British Birding Fair next year (and will possibly also go to the Dutch Birding Fair). The target is to raise R150,000.

Thanks to Elsa Gebhard: The Chairman thanked Elsa for hosting the WCBF meeting and congratulated her on the successful organising of the 4th Stanford Glendower Bird Fair, with its excellent and varied programme of talks, films, demonstrations, outings and events.

The next meeting: WCBF Meetings Calendar 2008

- 23 February (Helderberg NR, Somerset West)
- 7 June (CBC hosting, Durbanville NR)
- 4 October (Stanford)