

# *Western Cape Birding Forum*

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

**Minutes** of the meeting held at the Kristo Pienaar Environmental Centre, Tygerberg Nature Reserve  
Saturday, 27 September 2014.

**Vernon Head** - Chaired the Meeting.

**Sylvia Ledgard** - Minutes.

## **Present**

**Cape Bird Club:** Vernon Head, Sylvia Ledgard, Anne Gray, Dave Whitelaw, Sean de Nobrega,  
Jo Hobbs, Joan Ackroyd (Membership)

**Tygerberg Bird Club:** Brigid Crewe, Brian Vanderwalt.

**West Coast Bird Club:** Colin de Kock, Keith Harrison.

**Somerset West Bird Club:** Brian Dennis, Alistair Lohead.

**Stanford Bird Club:** Chris Cheetham (representing also BirdLife Overberg and Hermanus Bird Club).

**BLSA:** Samantha Ralston (Birds and Renewable Energy Manager).

**SANCCOB:** Stephen van der Spuy (Clinical Veterinarian & Conservation Projects Co-ordinator),  
Venessa Strauss (Conservation Director & Head of Oiled Wildlife Response Unit).

**Cape Nature:** Kevin Shaw (Scientific Services)

**SABAP2:** Peter Nupen.

**Visitor:** Tony Williams (Ornithologist).

## **Apologies**

Anton Odendal, Peter Hochfelden, Craig Holmes, Sakkie Krynauw, Otto Schmidt, Yvonne Weiss,  
Pat Nurse, Bill Naude, Salome Willemse.

**Welcome extended to first-time attendees:** Chris Cheetham and Alistair Lohead.

**1. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES** of previous meeting (07/06/2014) - Agreed.

**2. PRESENTATION** SANCCOB's Current and Future Interventions to help the Bank Cormorant by  
Dr. Stephen van der Spuy.

Dr. van der Spuy set up the veterinary clinic at SANCCOB, was previously involved in conservation projects and currently co-ordinates seabird conservation for SANCCOB. He outlined the work being undertaken by SANCCOB for the rehabilitation and conservation of Cormorants with particular emphasis for the purposes of this presentation on the Bank Cormorant.

(1) Cormorant Conservation - IUCN Status

- Cape Cormorant: Endangered. South African population has decreased by 84% over 40 years. In 1978, there were 103,937 breeding pairs; in 2011, only 37,408. Reasons for decline: guano mining in the past, food shortage avian cholera, disturbance, habitat loss, oil pollution. Habitat: inshore marine habitats, estuaries and lagoons.
- Bank Cormorant: Endangered. Location: Cape Agulhas to central Namibia. South African population has decreased by 44% since 1980 to just 846 breeding pairs in 2011-2014. Reasons for decline: decrease in and altered distribution of their main prey species (Rock Lobster), human disturbance, oiling, displacement from breeding habitat, predation and extreme weather events. Habitat: coast near kelp beds.

- Crozet Shag: Critically endangered. Location: Prince Edward and Crozet islands. There were 1,200 pairs in 2003 and an estimated decrease of 60% is forecast in the period 1994/5 to 2012/13.
- Crowned Cormorant: Near-threatened due to small population - in 2002, 8,700 individuals. Vulnerable to disturbance and marine pollution. Habitat: open coast and off-shore islands.
- White-breasted Cormorant: Least concern. Habitat: mainly freshwater bodies. Locally common.
- Reed Cormorant: Least concern. Habitat: inland freshwater bodies. Locally common.

(2) Cormorant Rehabilitation at SANCCOB.

- 2001-2013: Cape: 1,397. Bank: 59; Crowned: 122, White-breasted: 129, Reed: 29.

Two common problems are seen when Cormorants are admitted to SANCCOB:

a) Collapsed, very thin, severely dehydrated, very low blood protein. Causes: diarrhoea, various systemic illnesses, fungal and bacterial infections, air sacculitis, worms, starvation. Government has a big role to play in further research.

b) Various fractures, generally good body condition but severely traumatised.

(3) Goals for Conservation of the Bank Cormorant.

- Establish a captive conservation assurance population.
- Improve the rehabilitation rate.
- Build breeding platforms in the wild.
- Bank Cormorants breed close to water's edge and breeding sites are washed away in storms.
- Disease surveillance in the wild.
- Develop techniques to release captive bred Bank Cormorants into the wild.

A multi-pronged approach is needed. Breeding platforms are one tool to maintain a breeding population in the wild. Another is the collection of eggs to establish a captive population for release into the wild. In the past, Bank Cormorant eggs were collected and sent overseas - in 2004, to Living Coasts in the United Kingdom and again in 2009 for the start of a conservation assurance population. Now SANCCOB has its own Chick Rearing Unit with egg incubator and hatcher and is applying for permits to collect 12 Bank Cormorant eggs in 2015. Cape Cormorant chicks are currently being hand-reared at SANCCOB.

Comments (Tony Williams):

- There was a shift southward in pelagic fishing off southern Namibia, resulting in a massive increase then in the breeding success of Bank Cormorants. Now shifting again.
- A breeding platform is being used at Ichaboe Island. Cormorants breed at the edge of the platform. It must be located near a food source.
- Some interesting points for research:
  - (1) Eye colour-why does it differ between the species?
  - (2) Moulting-there are waves of moulting. What initiates this?
- Seal predation: A major problem, also Killer Whales.

Comment (KH): There is a small colony of Bank Cormorants on Marcus Island breeding throughout the year.

(TW): Dept. of Fisheries has given permits to the crayfishers to fish up against the island and the Bank Cormorants have gone.

**3. REGIONAL CONSERVATION UPDATE** - An Update on Renewable Energy Developments in the Western Cape by Sam Ralston. Renewable Energy has been identified as one of the main climate change mitigation interventions for South Africa. As a signatory to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, South Africa has pledged to strive to achieve 34% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 and 42% by 2025. BirdLife South Africa supports the responsible development of Renewable Energy in South Africa with due regard to minimising the impact on birds. The Birds & Wind Energy Specialist Group - a group of specialists who guide BirdLife South Africa and EWT's work towards minimising the impact of wind energy on birds - has been identified as a key stakeholder in the roll out of RE developments and provides advice to government, industry and environmental consultants.

(1) Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Programme (REIPPP). This programme has been designed to allow independent power producers to generate renewable energy and input this into the national grid. Initially there were hundreds of EIA applications for wind and solar energy sites. Some have been withdrawn or have lapsed. Only a small percentage of those projects with environmental approval will ever be built. There is a lot of development pressure in the Eastern Cape due to the perceived socio-economic benefits of renewable energy development. In the Western Cape, most of the proposed wind farms are in the West Coast and Karoo.

#### (2) Wind Energy

There have been three rounds of this project thus far:

- Round 1: 634MW (8 wind farms, approx. 250 turbines)
- Round 2: 563MW (7 wind farms, approx. 225 turbines)
- Round 3: 787MW (7 wind farms, approx. 300 turbines)

Bids have recently been submitted for the 4th round.

Preferred Bidders in the Western Cape:

- Round 1: Dassiesklip Wind Energy Facility, Hopefield Wind Farm (operational or near operational).
- Round 2: Wind Farm West Coast 1, Gouda Wind Farm (under construction).
- Round 3: None in the Western Cape.

Wind Energy and Birds. Wind energy can have a negative impact on birds. Potential threats include collision, habitat loss, displacement, and disturbance. Not all turbines are dangerous. Site selection and monitoring are critical. Experience in other parts of the world is that mortality through collisions is a rare event. One study looked at statistics from projects in various parts of the world and came up with an estimated average of 2.3 mortalities per turbine per year, but the variation in rates between wind farms is significant with a range of 0-60 mortalities/turbine/year. Most groups of birds are affected but raptors account for a large number of mortalities.

(3) Solar Energy. Solar plants/farms are designed to generate power through the photovoltaic (PV) process or concentrated solar power (CSP). CSP has the capacity to store energy for up to 9 hours.

Solar Projects in the Western Cape:

- Vredendal, Electra Capital, Aurora, SlimSun Swartland Solar Park, proposed Touwsrivier facility.

Solar Energy and Birds. Habitat loss was initially thought to be the biggest problem with solar energy. However, there is increasing evidence that birds can also be impacted by impact trauma or stranding if they collide with the reflective panels. Solar flux (areas of concentrated solar energy) at CSP facilities using power towers can also affect birds by burning them.

#### (4) BirdLife South Africa's Approach.

Discourage proposals in sensitive areas:

Tools: Avian Wind Sensitivity Map, Strategic Environmental Assessment, project screening.

- Promote rigorous impact assessment:
  - Tools: Best Practice Guidelines (wind) (not produced currently for solar), capacity building (DEA and specialists), comment on EIAs/casework.
  - Note: DEA has not officially endorsed the Guidelines
- Promote monitoring of impacts.
  - Tools: Best Practice Guidelines, review monitoring reports.
- Promote knowledge development.
  - Tools: Central repository for monitoring reports, facilitate research, facilitate information exchange.
  - Note: The Letseng wind facility in Lesotho has been approved. There is huge concern regarding the impact on the endangered Bearded Vulture. BLSA is working closely with the Department of the Environment in Lesotho and the developer in an attempt to resolve the issue.

#### (5) Challenges and Future Focus.

Solar energy: Monitoring and impact assessment.

Wind energy: (i) Post-construction monitoring critical; (ii) Operational phase mitigation.

- Defining "acceptable" levels of impact.
- Species specific guidance.
- Data management and access to data.
- Strategic environmental assessment.
- Cumulative impact on populations over a number of turbines.
- Sensitivity map.

#### (6) What Bird Clubs can do.

- Information gathering (e.g. SABAP2) to feed into Sensitivity map and screening.
- Comment on EIAs - local knowledge, engage with the details, and support Best Practice.
- Voluntary monitoring (e.g. My Bird Patch)
- Lobby developers to contribute to local conservation initiatives.
- Keep BirdLife South Africa informed.
- Use less electricity.

Comments and Questions:

(KH): There is the question of the distance covered by power lines from turbines to energy grid. EIAs cover only the immediate area of the turbines, not the area covered by power lines. (SR) Agree. The guidelines recommend that power lines be checked and marked.

(DW): Are wind farm developers adhering to the guidelines given? (SR) Compliance is increasing. This is where post-construction monitoring is important.

(DW): How sure are we about the predictions made in EIA? (SR): The Sensitivity map is being updated. It sufficed for initial guidelines but more research is now needed.

(TW): BLSA is pushing an over emphasis on raptors being impacted by wind turbines; other species are not taken into account to the same extent. (SR): Raptors do seem to be more vulnerable than waterbirds which seem to avoid turbines to some degree. (TW) They fly at night at turbine height. (PN): Waterbirds are a priority at the Gouda site.

(PN): Observers monitor species on the map, flight path and height at which the bird is flying. The information is given to the contractor. PN's concern is whether there is an oversight mechanism to ensure it is being followed. (SR) Yes, this is the role of the appointed bird specialists. Data recorded by observers is taken into account and adhered to where clear patterns emerge.

#### **4. FALSE BAY ECOLOGY PARK/STRANDFONTEIN:** (IBA SA116) by Dave Whitelaw.

(1) IBA Pilot Site-Corporate Funding.

- Melomed Group: Agreed to fund the annual Birdathon Fun Walk.
- Airport Company South Africa (ACSA). Funding proposal has been made. ACSA has indicated that funds are tied up for 5 years. We have re-packaged the proposal and sent it back to ACSA.
- Strandfontein: Research work continues on the littoral edge of the ponds.
- We are planning to re-construct the cormorant platforms.

#### **5. ENVIRONMENTAL/CONSERVATION CONCERNS-WEST COAST** by Keith Harrison.

\* Refer to Appendix 1 of these minutes for the full report. (Not included here).

The report covers:

(1) Estuary Management Forums:

Functioning well and projects are being completed due to having personnel in place.

- Verlorenvlei: Heavy vehicles transporting minerals on the Coastal road and passing through Verlorenvlei and Berg River are a major hazard. Concerns are road damage and spillage resulting from accidents. The Verlorenvlei Forum has had contingency plans drawn up. An option is to have a weight limit on lorries.
- Berg River:
  - Zones and regulations.
  - Channel buoys.
  - Fishing regulations for net fishers.
  - Hide at De Plaat to be removed.
  - Water analysis.
  - Farm No. 54, Vlaminkvlei: Application to extend urban edge to south side of the river.
- Saldahna Bay/Langebaan:  
Saldahna Bay Forum disbanded by municipality. Challenging decision.

(2) Mining.

- Elandsfontein Phosphates Mine: The original information from the Dept. of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning was incorrect. The mine is not in a declared reserve, critical biodiversity area or buffer zone and is classified as agricultural land. Water flow from the aquifer going into Geelbek has been investigated and found to come in at the bottom end of the lagoon and is safe. The concern is the top aquifer that enters the lagoon near Mykonos - incoming water will be treated to ensure that pollution does not enter the lagoon. Priority species are nesting Black Harriers, Southern Korhaan,

Hottentot Buttonquail and Martial Eagle.

- Oshkosh Sand Mine: Application made to mine 160,000 tonnes of sand per year on an adjacent portion of Elandsfontein Phosphates mine.

(3) Renewable Energy.

- Rheboksfontein Wind Farm: Problem arose with routing to the grid and application has been withdrawn. Proposed Vredenburg Wind Farm: Application in for 47 turbines - will have serious cumulative effect.

(4) West Coast National Park.

- Shark Bay: The application by the Langebaan Ratepayers and Residents Association to stop the building of 69 luxury houses on the east side of Langebaan Lagoon on land abutting WCNP has been finally dismissed in the Western Cape High Court and the development will proceed. WCNP will manage the portion of land for the developer that is not being built on.
- Kiteboarders: Rope barrier has been erected to stop kiteboarders from Shark Bay disturbing Seeberg hide.
- Seeberg hide: Plans have been drawn up for reconstruction and EIA is awaited. Seeberg is important also in winter at high tide - average count in August was 830 birds.
- Kleinmooimaak proposed development: No further information received.
- Abrahamskraal reed problem: WCNP management has been advised to contact the National Head of Scientific Services for guidance. Noted, WESSA has conducted a spraying trial at Blesbokspruit (RAMSAR site and IBA).

Comments. (VH): The Honorary Rangers could be approached;

(DW): Louise Stafford of the Invasive Species department at the City of Cape Town may be able to assist with having a formal management plan drawn up.

(5) West Coast Biodiversity Corridor.

- Landowners within the area expect 50% of their income to come from birding activity.
- Rehabilitation of estuaries is a proposal for the future.

(6) Langebaan Verreaux's Eagles. Female is incubating eggs. An earlier clutch was destroyed.

## **6. OTHER CONSERVATION CONCERNS.**

1) Pied Crows. VH has taken the issue to BLSA's Conservation Division. It is a real concern but good science must be there before acting. The key to further research is getting the funding.

Comments. (KS): CapeNature has a student working on this.

(DW): We must make sure that the question doesn't determine the answer - cause and effect must be critically examined.

(KH): We have 10 years of data on counting Pied Crows.

(2) Vulture Crisis - Appeal for funding support. BirdLife South Africa has issued a media release and video, highlighting the vulture crisis announced by BirdLife International, the world's biggest conservation partnership. In a bid to stop this important family of birds slipping towards extinction in Europe and Africa, they have launched a global campaign asking for public support to "Stop Vulture Poisoning Now". The veterinary drug diclofenac that is lethally toxic to vultures led to the crash of the White-rumped Vulture in India by 99.9% in a decade. Diclofenac is now available in Spain and Italy, both countries strongholds for vultures in Europe.

Eleven species of vultures occur on the African continent. Seven of these are listed on the IUCN Red List. The threats and extinction risks need to be fully understood so that action can be taken quickly, with priority. Threats to Africa's vultures include deliberate and accidental poisoning, habitat loss, energy infrastructure and persecution for body parts.

- Comment (DW): Secondary poisoning is the problem here with farmers poisoning carcasses to target animals that prey on their livestock. There have been incidents also of poachers' poisoning carcasses to kill vultures so that circling above a kill does not alert rangers. BirdLife South Africa is planning to launch a campaign to address the matter of funding and asks if there is a role that the Forums can play. A major sponsor is being sought.

**Action: Forum.**

International Vulture Awareness Day was celebrated by BirdLife SA on 6 September at Colleywobbles, the home of the largest colony of Cape Vultures in the Eastern Cape with up to 200 breeding pairs.

To donate to BirdLife International's campaign to save Africa's and Europe's vultures, go to [www.justgiving.com/stop-vulture-poisoning-now](http://www.justgiving.com/stop-vulture-poisoning-now)

Comments: (KS): The Cape Vulture colony at De Hoop Nature Reserve is working.

(BvdW): We need to get out the good news too. There is a positive story here that farmers are supporting the colony in the Western Cape. Use "positive" as a funding opportunity.

(3) Phillipi Wetlands (Dave Whitelaw). The initiative to encourage farmers to remain on the wetland has fallen flat and farmers who were interested have withdrawn support. An application to mine sand for 20 years is at the EIA stage and five other mining applications have been made.

Comment: (BvdW): Are we flogging a dead horse and putting our efforts in the wrong direction? Can birds from Phillipi be drawn to Strandfontein?

(DW): This is not practical. There are not many areas of seasonal wetland in Cape Town. Birds are one issue; the other is produce - half of Cape Town's vegetable produce comes from the Phillipi Horticultural Area. Keep farmers on the land and we'll keep the birds there.

(SR): Get the Department of Agriculture on board as an ally.

(KH): Talk to the Berg River Municipality in regard their fight for Moutonshoek.

**7. PROPOSAL FOR DESIGNATION OF CUBAs** (Critical Urban Bird Areas).

Feedback (VH): Tony William's motivation for the establishment of CUBAs is with BirdLife South Africa and will be looked at by the Conservation and IBA divisions. Report back at the next WCBF meeting.

**Action: Vernon Head.**

**8. OVERBERG UPDATE** (Chris Cheetham reported for Anton Odendal).

(1) Overberg Lowlands Conservation Trust. BLO congratulates Dr. Odette Curtis on the official opening of the Visitor and Resource Centre. BLO continues to support this project.

(2) African Penguin and Seabirds Rehabilitation Centre. This was a groundbreaking opening ceremony at Kleinbaai. Congratulations to staffers of the Dyer Island Conservation Trust.

(3) Cape Whale Coast Hot Spot. Members of the SA Shark Conservancy have been appointed to manage this Hope Spot and will be responsible for setting up the launch by D. Sylvia Earle in December.

(4) MoU with CapeNature. A decision was taken to use the Birds in Reserves Project (BIRP) methodology for bird counts. Members have attended training sessions and 9 BIRP cards have been submitted so far. Counts at Stewardship Sites (private property) will start in October.

(5) Marketing the Overberg. The planning of the "Cape Endemics" weekend is going well and the first such weekend will probably take place in spring 2015 while the whales are still around. The weekend will be targeted at Gauteng birders.

(6) Web page developments.

(a) Birding page for the Cape Town Metro completed and posted. The marketing division of WESGRO is thanked for sponsorship of this project. Negotiations are underway regarding posting of this information on the WESGRO and Cape Town websites.

(b) Web pages for all the regions of the province (Cape Town and five district municipal regions) are now complete and we will be speaking to Birdlife SA about the possibility of migrating this information to the BLSA birding tourism website.

(c) Birding page for the greater Plettenberg Bay region is complete and posted. The Plettenberg Bay Accommodation Association is thanked for sponsorship of this project. (d) Other prioritised regions now being targeted are: Theewaterskloof (includes Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve and the Overberg Wheatlands); Cape Agulhas (includes the National Park, De Hoop and De Mond Nature Reserves); George (includes Wilderness National Park); Witzenberg (includes Tankwa Karoo); Bergrivier (includes Groot Winterhoek Wilderness and Velddrif).

Project proposals and budgets have been disseminated to potential sponsors. Forum members are asked to assist with the identification of possible donors in the named regions.

**Action: Forum members.**

## **9. FESTIVALS AND FAIRS**

(1) **Walker Bay Bird Fair, Stanford** (Chris Cheetham). Dates; 25-28 February 2015. Place: Stanford.

- This will be the 10th anniversary of the event at Stanford. It has been expanded to include other bird clubs in the area (Hermanus and Stanford) and renamed the Walker Bay Bird Fair. BirdLife Overberg will not participate on this occasion. Agulhas has started a birding group under Stanford. The Bird Fair will be modelled on the Rutland Birdfair (England) and the Sasol Birdfair (Johannesburg). Events will include international speaker Tim Appleton of Rutland Waters and national speakers, guided birding trips in the area, bird identity courses, special raptor id course, raptor rehabilitation talk and demo, bird ringing demonstrations, photographic competition, introduction to bird photography, bino's and 'scope exhibition by Orms and morning and evening boat cruises on the Bot River lagoon.

(2) **"Celebrate our Seas"** (Vernon Head with input also from Christina Hagen). Dates: 6 - 12 October 2014. The annual SOS festival has been expanded to include a broad range of marine conservation organisations. To reflect the broader focus of the festival, it has been renamed "Celebrate our Seas". It is still part of National Marine Week. BirdLife South Africa will be hosting 103 American Birding Association delegates. Events among others will include:

- the "Oceans of Life" photographic competition with a 12-day "Spirit of Antarctica expedition" as first prize in the open category, courtesy of Aurora Expeditions, and a Canon EOS7D with lens in the youth category, courtesy of Canon SA.
- a raffle with prizes worth R20,000, organised by Trevor Hardaker and sponsored by Zest for Birds and other sponsors, to raise funds for the conservation work of the Seabird Division of BirdLife South Africa.
- A gala auction dinner at The Grand.
- Lectures, demonstrations and activities organised by various partner organisations.

(3) **SANCCOB** (Venessa Strauss)

(a) 13th Annual African Penguin Awareness Day. Date: Saturday, 11 October.

African Penguin Awareness Day is celebrated to raise worldwide awareness about the plight of the endangered African Penguin, with fewer than 2% of the population remaining in the wild. In Cape Town, events will include:

- Penguin Festival: A family fun day with stalls and interactive games and displays at Boulders Beach, Simonstown.
- Penguin Beach Release: A real-life beach release of rehabilitated African Penguins at Seaforth beach, Simonstown.

(b) Benefit Auction. Date: 15 October. This prestigious event will be hosted by celebrity comedian Nic Rabinowitz at the Clipper Restaurant, Commodore Hotel, to raise funds for SANCCOB'S seabird conservation work.

#### **10. SABAP2 UPDATE** (Peter Nupen)

Since the start of SABAP2 in July 2007, 1,511 observers have submitted a total of 111,483 Full Protocol Cards. From these cards, 5,854,008 individual records of bird species have been captured. This gives a wealth of very accurate information over a 7-year period of species distribution and their movement.

In the Western Cape, of the 17,339 pentads covering the region, 13,478 have at least one FPC, representing 77.73% coverage - a great achievement. Three out of every four pentads have been atlased. Atlasing continues to gain momentum and the 2014 calendar year is heading towards being a record with currently 587 observers having submitted 12,492 cards with 624,064 records. At this rate, the Western Cape will exceed the 2010 record of 18,364 checklists.

SABAP2 is absolutely fundamental to wild bird conservation in South Africa. It holds this status because knowledge of wild bird distributions and how they are changing through time are the most important ingredients in determining which species are showing signs of getting into trouble and prioritising resources for conservation initiatives. Atlasing is birding with a purpose.

#### **11. BIRDLIFE South Africa** (Vernon Head).

(1) & (2) New Governance Structure and Membership Administration. BirdLife SA has issued a memorandum defining the incoming changes in the organisation's governance structure and membership administration which will become effective following ratification of constitutional changes at the Annual General Meeting in March 2015. \*Refer to Appendices attached.

The new governance structure will enable the organisation to become more professional and more efficient. The new membership structure will simplify membership and enable more birdwatchers and bird conservationists to join the organisation.

Questions arising.

- **Governance:** (CdeK) registered concern that in the new structure the chairman of the Governance Committee is not represented on the Executive Board. He felt in the interests of transparency and communication this should be the case, at least in an observer capacity. A further concern is that the Chairman of the Governance Committee selects his own team. (VH): The Governance Committee will be an independent committee with responsibility to monitor and report on the actions of the Executive Board. (Confirmation feedback from VH: Chairman of the Governance Committee will sit on Exco with observer status. Chairman of Governance Committee will not elect his/her committee; this will be done by an electoral college.)
- **Membership:** Affiliated bird clubs will pay an affiliation fee of R15 per member per annum. What is the interpretation of member? Do Family members count as members for this purpose or is the count based on Main member? (Confirmation feedback from VH: Only Main (principal) member is counted.) Note: The Club is affiliated to BirdLife South Africa, not the member; members have the option to be members of BirdLife South Africa in their personal capacity.

Note: There will also be a Scientific Committee to advise BLSA on scientific issues.

(3) Owl Awards 2014.

(a) Owl Awards: Western Cape recipients. - Dave Whitelaw. Dave was honoured for his contribution to conservation as chairman of the Cape Bird Club's conservation committee since 1989 and his engagement in conservation work in the Western Cape, with particular focus on the False Bay Ecology Park IBA and the Strandfontein Birding Area. Dave in turn paid tribute to his conservation committee team.

(b) Eagle Owl Awards: Mike McCullough, Strilli Oppenheimer.

(4) Birding Big Day 2014. Date: 29 November. 2014 marks the 30th annual Birding Big Day. A new category has been added - "Bird your 'Hood". This is a "low carbon footprint" category that gives 24 hours to go birding in your garden, local park, school grounds or suburb, so long as it is close enough to walk, bike or hike. Other categories are "Open (for competitive birders, 2-4 people-50 km radius) and "Family/Community" (for fun birding, 2-20 people-50 km radius).

(5) Flufftail Festival - "Celebrating our Wetlands". The inaugural Flufftail Festival will be held at Sandton City in Johannesburg from 2-6 February 2015 to raise awareness of one of South Africa's scarcest natural resources - water - and the birds that rely on wetland habitats. It is linked to World Wetland Day (2 February) which is celebrated to raise worldwide awareness of wetlands. Events will include lectures, environmental education activities, a "Wetlands of Life" photographic competition and an exhibition of the winning photographs.

(6) Vote for South Africa's Favourite Bird. This is a campaign to get every South African involved. It will be launched on 30 November with a vote-poll page on the BLSA website and on Facebook. Contestants will be able to choose from 52 species. A number of celebrities and organisations will campaign for their species. Closing date for entries will be 28 February 2015 and the winner will be announced at Flock 2015 in March.

(7) Cape to Cape Sub-Antarctic Expedition on the Tristan da Cunha (Feb. 29-March 23, 2016): Sets sail from Cape Horn on the Tierra del Fuego archipelago of southern Chile and finishes in Cape Town. This will be a 23-day expedition with Peter Harrison across the southern ocean, taking in the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the islands of the South Atlantic including Gough, Tristan da Cunha, Nightingale and Inaccessible. Luxury accommodation and lectures on board. Cost (single berth) will be approximately R150,000. BLSA will get the first pick of tickets.

**12. YOUTH DEVELOPMENT.** Not addressed.

**13. FLAMINGO BIRD CLUB:** An outreach project for WCBF (Vernon Head)

The Flamingo Bird Club was an initiative started by Anne Gray as a bird and environmental club in the Phillipi Horticultural Area in September 2010 under the auspices of the Cape Bird Club. Over time it developed from a bird club with signed up members into an outreach project on the Cape Flats, further exposing children from under-privileged localities to environmental education through bird walks, slide shows, talks and activities such as the annual Birdathon at Strandfontein. The Cape Bird Club has suggested that the project will be better placed as a Regional outreach project with WCBF and has agreed that funds be transferred accordingly. Anne noted that birding activities are creating a lot of interest in the Cape Flats and she finds herself working with all levels of people. A recent case in point was taking 10 men who are on a substance abuse rehabilitation programme to Strandfontein for an afternoon of birding. Juniors from the GuGuleto Street Soccer Team have twice been taken to Kirstenbosch. A group from Nyanga on the "Fit for Life" course were taken birding to the Ottery wetlands. In April, 120 pupils from three schools were taken on bird walks around Princes Vlei. The project is supported by funding sponsorship which is used primarily for transporting children to activities.

Questions arising:

(CdeK) asked whether funding could be found to assist outreach projects on the West Coast. Presentations have been made to some schools and others are interested. They would like to get into Velddrif High, Vredenburg Hoer, Aurora Hoer, Goedverwacht School, Witwaters Skool and possibly the Moravian Mission. CdeK to send a motivation to Vernon.

**Action: Colin de Kock**

Indemnity for Public Liability: The matter of indemnity arises when organising club and public activities. (VH:) Legal advice should be taken. Participants must sign an Indemnity Form. (CC): We are looking at the legalities of public liability for the Bird Fair and will report back. (BD): It should be noted that additional obligations apply when taking children on outings, etc. Sylvia will send examples of Indemnity Forms as used

by bird clubs to the Forum.

**Action: Sylvia Ledgard.**

**14. WCBF CONFERENCE** Ebb & Flow, Wilderness (11-13 Sept. 2015) (Brian Vanderwalt).

The list of participants and accommodation requirements is to hand. National Parks bookings for next year open in October and arrangements will then go forward.

**15. GENERAL** (Anne Gray)

(1) International Beach Clean-up Day (20 Sept.): The Plastics Federation approached Anne for volunteers to assist with local beach clean-up at Eerste Steen north of Blaauwberg and at Somerset West in the marine reserve between Lourens and Eerste Rivers (old AECI area, now closed). Because of the condition of these beaches, Plastics Federation will organise additional clean-ups.

(2) New Birding Venues:

(a) Driftsands. An invitation has been received from CapeNature for bird clubs to visit the Driftsands Nature Reserve which is located adjacent to the Medical Research Council in Delft. The reserve is on 500 ha of endangered Cape Flats Strandveld. Bird clubs can arrange to do a 'recce and should contact Anne Gray in this connection.

(b) Film Studios site: Anne has a contact for a second venue in the future - the Film Studios site - which is in direct line 7km east of Driftsands. The site is under restoration and will not be open to the public until well into 2015.

(3) Finch-Davies Exhibition of Paintings at the Castle. C.G. Finch-Davies (1875-1920) produced a series of paintings of birds at the Castle. An exhibition of these paintings was launched on 18 September at the Castle. An interesting aspect is that Jessie Blackshaw has been doing MyBirdPatch surveys of birds at the Castle since January 2012 and her birdlist has been featured alongside Finch-Davies' paintings, together with some of her photographs where paintings were absent.

**16. WCBF MEETINGS CALENDAR 2015.**

- 07 February
- 06 June
- 12 September

**NEXT MEETING: Saturday 07 February** at the **Environmental Centre, Helderberg Nature Reserve, Somerset West.** Somerset West Bird Club will host this meeting.