

Western Cape Birding Forum

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

Minutes from the Meeting on 9 June 2007, at the ***Durbanville Nature Reserve, Durbanville.***

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

Brigid de Kock – Minutes.

Those Present

Cape Bird Club: Vernon Head, Anne Gray, Jo Hobbs, Otto Schmidt, Dave Whitelaw, Frank Wygold, Helen Fenwick, Heather Howell

Tygerberg Bird Club: Brigid de Kock, Antoinette le Roux, Helene Thompson, Ione Vanderwalt

Somerset West Bird Club: John Carter, Brian Dennis, Freya Brett

West Coast Bird Club: Jan Jurgen Kotze, Keith Harrison

Birdlife Stellenbosch: Willene van der Merwe, Nico Venter

Hermanus Bird Club: Lee Burman, John Saunders

Visitors: Doug Newman (Birdlife SA), Les Underhill, Doug Harebottle

Apologies

Anton Odendal, Sylvia Ledgard.

Minutes of previous meeting (10/02/2007): Correction – (page 5) – Expected that 350 000 people will be coming to SA for the 2010 World Cup.

Minutes accepted.

SABAP2

Doug Harebottle illustrated that SABAP1 largely achieved its objective of providing the 1st description of the distribution of all bird species in southern Africa, providing a snapshot of distribution of each species during the late 1980s to early 1990s. The software developed for this project was used to develop atlas projects for the SA Frog atlas, and is now being used for SA Reptiles and Butterflies.

During the past 15 years bird distribution in southern Africa have continued to change rapidly. Large scale landscape changes, habitat loss, transformation and fragmentation, coupled with climate change and alien invasion have contributed to changing bird distributions. Monitoring bird movements and putting effective management plans to conserve bird populations and diversity in southern Africa in the future is crucial.

SABAP2 was identified as the project to lead the way. Based on large scale recommendations by SABAP1 and the scientific and birding communities, two broad aims were identified:

1. A scientifically rigorous, repeatable platform for tracking through time and space the impacts of environmental change on southern African birds, through standardized data collections on bird distribution and an index of abundance.
2. Increased public participation in biodiversity data collection, and public awareness of birds, through large-scale mobilization of citizen scientists.

Info gathered from SABAP2 will need to be comparable, as much as possible to the info available from SABAP1, in order to monitor how things have changed. Improved technology will allow better and improved data to be collected.

Major changes between the two include:

- a finer spatial scale (pentad grids and not ¼ degree grids)
- a tighter temporal resolution (max.5 days observation period & not a calendar month)
- standardized data collection (everyone will record species in the same way, i.e. visiting all habitats on day 1)
- measure of observer effort (recording of species will be linked to time spent in the field)
- better quality of data will be achieved overall with the new project.

Each Bird Club is asked to identify “champions” in their clubs, who will then oversee the data collection, and completing of field data sheets. The website for these sheets are: www.sabap2.org

The project is overseen by Steering and Executive committees, and implemented by a Project team. It is funded through SANBI and Birdlife SA and is managed and run by the ADU, University of Cape Town and Birdlife.

The Bird Clubs will play a crucial coordination role in rolling out project materials (i.e. starter packs, provided by the ADU), appointing a SABAP2 champion in each club and taking some responsibility for coverage in their local patches but also in areas outside of their home base. Doug was thanked for his informative presentation.

12th Pan-African Ornithological Conference 2008 (7-12 September 2008)

The Goudini Spa was chosen as the suited venue. Theme: BIRDS & PEOPLE – Interaction, utilization and conservation. This scientific conference was held every 4 years, and would coincide with the 25th anniversary of the Fitzpatrick.

Other topics that would be looked at were:

- Birds and Climate change/People/Mining/Fisheries/Agriculture/Hunting etc,
- Bird club volunteers would be needed to manage a “Welcome” Desk at the airport,
- run a shuttle service,
- guide bird walks,
- run an Info desk at Goudini,
- Overall PRO work would be done by volunteers,
- A large group of international visitors and speakers were expected to attend.

Important bird areas (IBA) Programme

Vernon Head was appointed as Regional coordinator. Each bird club was asked to adopt a member responsible for coordinating with Vernon, and also overseeing data collection, choosing a club site etc. A meeting where Neil Smith of Birdlife was specially coming to address the forum, was scheduled for 23/06/2007 at 10h00, at the same venue.

Western Cape Birding Routes

Training of West Coast guides would commence shortly. Anton Odendal asked all birders to donate their old unwanted bird field guides, which could then be given to the future bird guides. Domain names were

reserved, and the 6 Routes were to be launched on the web in September 2007. The West Coast training course, still required additional guides to take part. John Carter asked if the Somerset West club could be involved in the setting up of the Winelands Route.

National Rarities

The official National Rarities was once again up and running. Birdlife were busy sorting out the last splits, to have a finalised southern African Bird list available.

CWAC and CAR

Les Underhill reported that CWAC and CAR were now funded by SANBI, and the debt backlog was going to be refunded to UCT. The future of these projects (as well as the Reptile SARCA, SABAP2 and Butterfly SABCA) now looked secure.

Birders were asked to submit their photographs of butterflies to www.butterflies.adu.org.za

CONSERVATION

House Crow Programme: Dave Whitelaw gave a updated report. SPCA were still trying to put pressure on the eradication programme. A report by the ethics committee had now been tabled, to prove that minimum pain or distress would be suffered by the birds. The poison exclusively attacks the kidneys of the bird, and was host-specific. The chances of non target birds being effected was absolutely minimal. It was too late to start the project this season. Roost sights were still being monitored. All future dead carcasses of birds, would be incinerated.

Lourens River tern roost: In the absence of Dirk van Driel, John Carter and the Somerset West Bird Club committee were asked to keep tabs on any developments. The importance of correspondence between the various parties was crucial. Kindly also keep Kevin Shaw, Gordon Scholtz and Dave Whitelaw informed.

Extension of iron ore terminal at Saldanha: Keith Harrison reported that the new owners of the Sardinia development wanted to treble the capacity of the terminal. The area would have to be considerably deepened. The draft scoping report was complete. Objections were lodged by Birdlife SA, who would be supported by Birdlife International. A container terminal in the Bay was also in the pipeline for future oil/gas finds off the West Coast. A railway line from Cape Town to Saldanha was proposed. Concern was voiced that the EIA's were focused solely on the local area, and not on the bigger Langebaan lagoon and West Coast National Park. Silt pollution would be of major concern to the area.

Oil pollution risk management was in place, and a boom could be put around a vessel in 7 minutes, and the lagoon could be cordoned off in 5 minutes. A buoy was put at the entrance to the harbour, which can measure when the swell is greater than 2m, at which time all unloading is stopped. Fishing vessels dumping diesel illegally, was also still a problem.

Berg River/De Plaat areas: Concern was voiced at the 2 proposed developments above the railway line. At Melkplaas, small holdings were to be considered. At De Plaat, 400 erven was to be considered. Mark Duckitt was approached to look at the 50 year flood level and the Old wagon road. Birdlife might be asked to give input.

Vredenburg/Under Big White Rock area: Was sold to developers, and the boundary was moved 30m East, away from the permanent wetland. Andrew Jenkins wants them to consider turning this into a conservation area.

Berg River: Keith and Jan pointed out that all roosts were much more active towards evening, and suggested that the bird counts should be done later in the day.

Fossil Park: 80 species of Birds have been identified amongst the fossil finds. The park needs to be included in the Birding Route Info, and if possible funds raised for a promotional DVD. Anton to be contacted in this regard (KH).

Owl Centre: Tevrede Owl Rehabilitation at Tulbach is in dire straits, and urgently needs funding by Bird clubs. Elize Kemp has seen 19 000 kids through her center, and has done sterling work in educating disadvantaged school children.

BLSA MATTERS

Nomination for Owl/Eagle Awards: The Birdlife AGM is to be held at Hermanus next year (12-16 March 2008). An Owl award is awarded to a person who has made a considerable contribution to the conservation of birds and their habitats. Local nominations are required by the next forum meeting at Stanford in September this year.

The next meeting: would be held during the Stanford Birding Fair, at 12h00 on (Sat) 29 September 2007.