

# *Western Cape Birding Forum*

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

**Minutes** at Durbanville Nature Reserve, Durbanville on Saturday, 5 March 2011.

**Vernon Head** - Chaired the Meeting.

**Sylvia Ledgard** - Minutes.

## ***Present***

**Cape Bird Club:** Vernon Head, Sylvia Ledgard, Anne Gray, Dave Whitelaw.

**Hermanus Bird Club:** Terry Demmer, Lee Burman.

**Somerset West Bird Club:** Brian Dennis, Freya Brett, Rene Lind, Denise Rizzo.

**Tygerberg Bird Club:** Gerald Wingate, Brian Vanderwalt.

**West Coast Bird Club:** Keith Harrison, Angus Stewart, Gill Stewart.

**BirdLife Stellenbosch:** Willene Van der Merwe

## ***Also attending***

Dr Tony Williams (bird collisions), Peter Nupen (SABAP2)

## ***Apologies***

Anton Odendal, Barbara Palmer, Royd Frith, John Carter, Jill Mortimer, Kobus Graaff, Peet le Roux, Jo Hobbs, Otto Schmidt, Ross Wanless, Yvonne Weiss.

## ***Welcome***

Vernon welcomed all.

**Minutes of Previous Meeting (09/10/2010):** Agreed.

## **EIA's**

Vernon reported there is ever increasing pressure on BLSA and WCBF to respond to development threats to sensitive natural environments. The number of EIAs runs into hundreds and the question arises of how to handle and respond to the volume going forward. It is clear that a system must be put in place to rationalise and formalise the process.

CapeNature has a filtering process based on pre-determined criteria and linked into a sensitivity map that triggers responses. BLSA is consulting with CapeNature in this regard with a view to creating a sensitivity map and putting a system in place that will register how to respond as EIAs come in.

## **IBAs-Western Cape (Vernon Head)**

**Workshop:** The launching of the IBA Programme in the Western Cape is the most important issue for WCBF this year. A prerequisite will be a full-scale workshop in Cape Town over two to three days (Friday-Sunday), run by BLSA's IBA management team - Daniel Marnewick and Ernst Retief. (Proposed dates 24 - 26 June). The workshop will cover:

- EIAs - Management of EIAs and processing.
- IBAs - Prioritising of IBAs and procedures for monitoring and management.

Intended outcomes would be:

- Participants equipped to deal effectively with the processes involved in EIAs and IBAs.

- The appointment of an IBA Manager and Working Group (sub-committee) for the Western Cape.

Noted that Shaun Overmeyer has agreed in principle to take on the role of IBA Manager. He is a passionate birder and a corporate executive in Toyota. We are hoping to get national sponsorship for BLSA from Toyota, with IBA's as part of the package.

Funding of workshop: Several clubs have contributed funds to facilitate a workshop, but further sponsorship must be found.

**Action:** VH & WCBF members.

**Funding of IBA's:** Funding of IBA's is the single most critical component of this initiative. A funding strategy is being prepared for marketing IBA's to corporate South Africa. Strandfontein will be used as a test case. The objective is to find a corporate that can benefit by association. In this context, we are talking to Consol Glass.

Comments:

(PN): SANBI has a superb GIS environmental database which is in the public domain. It would be worthwhile incorporating this database in making informed decisions for IBA strategy. (VH): SANBI is on board. We must have a team approach with layered vested interests.

(BvdW): There have been concerns regarding conflict of interests where corporate sponsorship is involved, e.g. Sasol. (VH): Conservation is part of corporate responsibility. It is a legal requirement and corporate business is looking for opportunities to tick this off. Careful monitoring will be applied to ensure there are no infringements. Funds will also be used to create educational opportunities in surrounding communities. It is important that IBA's are integrated with and benefit local communities.

## BLSA

### Marketing Strategy

Marketing Committee: A dynamic young team comprising members from the Advertising industry and BLSA make up the Marketing Committee, whose task it is to raise BLSA's profile in the marketplace. The CEO understands the importance of marketing BLSA to corporate South Africa. Big business is looking for opportunities to enhance their "green" image by way of adding a conservation element to their corporate brand.

Pick n Pay has become a Corporate Member of BLSA. The Pick 'n Pay "Smart Shopper" card, till points and products will carry the BLSA brand.

ETV will give BLSA five PSA's (public service access slots). Top production and advertising components are involved

Diemersfontein Wine has introduced a new "For the Birds" label for their red blend. A portion from the sale of every bottle goes to "Save the Seabirds" fund.

Golden Bird Patrons: Looking to identify wealthy people in organisations to become patrons of BLSA.

Billboard Advertising: Continental Media have given BLSA all their free billboards anywhere in the country. All that BLSA has to do is pay for the printing. The Marketing Committee has designed a number of themed billboard campaigns for 2011, including Seabirds and Sporting Personalities.

Spring / Summer Campaign - "Welcome back to our Summer Visitors" - looking to sell a Barn Swallow billboard to ACSA

Gift Membership. "Gift to give a friend" vouchers, printed on recycled paper, are available from BLSA. Order forms can be found on the BLSA website under "Useful Stuff", or e-mail Nikki McCartney on

[mbr@birdlife.org.za](mailto:mbr@birdlife.org.za)

## **Festivals:**

- Save our Seabirds (SOS). This year the V & A Waterfront will come on board and also the City of Cape Town. Cape Town will carry the SOS brand throughout the city and the festival will become part of National Marine Week.
- World Sports Group and other big events in South Africa will associate with BLSA by way of branding. AGM Weekend: It is the intention to develop the AGM into a BirdLife festival by attaching birding activities to the event. AGM 2011 takes place at Nelspruit 18 - 21 March.
- National Bird Week 2011 (3-8 May): ACSA will sponsor NBW this year. The Barn Swallow has been selected as Bird of the Year. Posters will be included in Africa Birds & Birding and lesson plans are being developed.

Comment on Barn Swallow Ringing (Gerald Wingate): There is a small private nature reserve next to Durbanville where Barn Swallows come in to roost in the reed-beds. TBC has been ringing there for the past three summers. In the first year, 186 birds were ringed. Last summer, 2,265 birds were ringed, while six controls (foreign rings) were recorded - one from Spain and five from the United Kingdom. Ten swallows ringed at this site were re-trapped during that season. To date this year, 1,385 birds have been ringed, with two controls recorded from the UK and eight re-traps of birds ringed on site during the previous seasons.

Position Statements on Wild Birds: Policy statements relating to Public Safety in Birding Areas, Wild Bird Ringing and Invasive Birds can be found on the BLSA website. These offer guidelines on bird related issues. Site Write-Ups for Birding Routes: Write-ups for all sites are now on the BLSA website. These are useful for the birding tourism industry.

**BLSA Finances:** BLSA Treasurer Mike McCullough reports that income is up and expenditure is under control. Indications are that year-end results will show a small profit. Final results will be reported at the forthcoming AGM.

**Revised Constitution:** Proposed revisions will be ratified at the AGM. The main point at issue is the classification of bird clubs as "branches" of BirdLife South Africa. The concern is that legally this could imply a formal corporate relationship between BLSA and its bird club members that could result in potential legal liability on the part of one or the other and a possible requirement to consolidate accounts. The new provisions remove all reference to "branches". In no way does the proposed document intrude on the autonomy, rights or privileges of bird clubs. Rather, the new provisions provide a protection that did not exist before and remove certain strictures that had previously applied.

It is important that Clubs are seen as separate legal entities that control their own finances and activities, while still remaining part of BLSA. Clubs will be encouraged to have their own name

## **SABAP2**

Nationally, SABAP2 is close to achieving 50% coverage of South Africa. To date, 49,243 Full Protocol Cards have been submitted, covering 8,550 pentads and representing 49.37% coverage of the surface area of South Africa. SA has been divided into an approximate 8km X 8km grid, so in effect one out of every two grid squares covering the whole of SA, has been atlased at least once.

In the Western Cape, 1,234 of the 1,836 pentads have at least one Full Protocol Card, representing 67.2% coverage of the region. To date, 10,131 Full Protocol Cards have been submitted (KZN, our closest rival, has submitted 8,117 FPCs.) This still leaves 602 virgin pentads to be tackled. Distance is the problem. A number of atlasing weekends is being planned to cover areas where there are large holes in the map, 50 - 60 unatlased pentads will be selected, starting in June and then again in mid-September. The first effort will be north, east and west of Van Rhyndorp.

VH suggested that CBC may be able to partly fund the drive and other clubs could get involved to provide funds. A piece could be carried in Promerops.

**Action:** Peter Nupen

Note: There is a new SABAP2 website.

## CONSERVATION

### Environmental Threats

(1) **Wind Farm:** a radar survey (Tony Williams): TW presented the results of a 5-day radar survey and moon-watch carried out in November 2010 at a West Coast farm, which had been proposed as a wind farm site. Mobile radar equipment worth R2-million was used, with 18 operators monitoring the equipment through the night. WCBC, TBC and CBC assisted with the survey. The intention was to record birds flying mainly at night between two major wetlands from the Berg River and Langebaan. Flight height, direction and speed were recorded. The number of birds recorded flying over the test site was very low, with none recorded at night. Some 4,000 Kelp Gulls were seen in passage during the day but not over the site. KH indicated that the gulls fly regularly up and down the West Coast between St. Helena and Mykanos and would go through wind farm sites in that corridor. More surveys would be needed across the seasons, particularly to record the passage of migrating waders - good timing would be the middle of April.

Comments:

(DW): The problem for birds is not so much collision but the Venturi effect of the wind turbines, with birds getting sucked in when flying over, so location is critical.

(BvdW): What about small birds like larks which fly high when displaying? (TW): The radar only picks up birds larger than a pigeon.

(KH): The DEA has put a moratorium on the adjudication of wind farm applications. They have 70 applications, but only nine will go forward in the first phase.

(2) **Flaminkvlei:** The proposed Flaminkvlei development failed to get off the ground within a stipulated three-year period and has been stopped. A number of factors contributed to the delays and problems. The development was opposed by CapeNature and a number of NGOs.

(3) **Cerebos Site** (Dave Whitelaw): The CBC Conservation Committee has been in discussion with CapeNature, Keith Harrison, the Fitzitute and the ADU on the future of the Cerebos site and was asked to come up with proposals for possible rehabilitation. It should be noted that the re-location of Cerebos and closure of the site may not be imminent. The committee is of the view that the site is not being well managed and it may be possible to approach Cerebos with a view to offering advice and support on how to improve it, e.g. find money to manage the site. Preliminary proposals are attached as a record to these minutes. KH noted that salt works are a mining operation and subject to regulation. Professional input will be needed. BvdW suggested we look into the origin of the name "Cerebos" with a view to possibly identifying a corporate we can use.

(4) **Fracking-Gas Drilling in the Karoo** (DW): Oil giant Royal Dutch Shell plans to prospect for shale gas in the Karoo. The process known as "fracking" has been used since 1940 and involves drilling holes 4-5 meters deep and setting off underground explosions. Water containing sand and highly toxic chemicals is then forced in under high pressure to release and suck out shale gas. The problem is that certain types of rock formation, such as Karoo shale, are friable and larger cracks can open up, creating subsidence and allowing toxic chemicals to penetrate and pollute the sensitive underground water source. Shell was given just two weeks to assess the ground-water level in the Karoo. There are many unanswered questions regarding where the water will come from - each well that is drilled will need around 20-million litres of water - pollution of the Karoo's aquifers, disposal of toxic waste, road infrastructure and environmental damage. A petition has been launched to oppose the development and it is suggested that BLSA be approached to back a campaign to boycott Shell.

VH confirmed that BLSA is using a three-pronged approach:

- Involving Johan Rupert whose wife, Gaynor, is a BLSA patron. This part of the Karoo is important to him. He has influential family connections in Holland and Shell in South Africa is linked to Royal Dutch Shell.
- Sending a delegation to Shell.
- Mounting a campaign to boycott Shell.(5) **Lourens River Tern Roost:** John Carter reported earlier that a website campaign had been mounted to remove the fence that was originally erected by AECI when they were manufacturing chemicals. At the present time, Heartland (the property wing of AECI) is the custodian of the land, which is in a lengthy process of ground decontamination. An important aspect of the fence from a conservation viewpoint is that it protects access to the river mouth, which is used as a roosting site by some 20,000 Terns that migrate from Norway, Estonia, Finland and Russia each year. In addition, African Black Oyster-catchers breed on the stretch of beach from the river mouth to Macassar. Duncan and Ines Cooke are championing the issue locally for the Lourens River Conservation Society. Information now to hand is that the conservator at the HNR has given the assurance that the fence will not be removed. The situation will continue to be monitored.

#### Species Concerns

House Crows (DW): The programme is progressing and indications are that the success experienced with virtual elimination of the species in Natal will be replicated here.

The crows have changed their roosts and likely roost sites should be reported to DW or [Louise.Stafford@capetown.gov.za](mailto:Louise.Stafford@capetown.gov.za).

Note: Sightings of House Crows can now be recorded on the SABAP2 Special Watch site.

#### **PROCLAMATION ON NATURE RESERVES** (Dave Whitelaw)

The City of Cape Town is in the process of proclaiming 17 sites, ranging from the Kogelberg Mountains to Zandvlei, as Contract Nature Reserves under the Protected Areas Act. All have unique and critical biodiversity. The majority of these areas have been managed historically as nature reserves by the City. They range in size from 3.2 hectares (Harmony Flats) to 2,500 hectares (False Bay). Most of the City's nature reserves do not have adequate conservation protection. Many of the sites were proclaimed under outdated ordinances and acts and some have no official conservation status at all. In many instances, the reserves have grown and the official reserve boundaries were never adjusted to include this newly acquired land. As such, it is essential that all the reserves under the jurisdiction of the City acquire formal protection under the National Environmental Management Protected Areas Act, 2003 (NEMA).

Considerations are: compliance with the Cape Action Plan for the Environment to conserve 30% of each biome in the Cape Metropolitan area; creation of a network of open spaces so that plants and animals can move between reserves; recreational and educational opportunities.

CapeNature is the authority responsible for the proclamation of Nature Reserves in the Western Cape. The 17 sites have been presented to them and other line function departments and the response has been positive.

It was noted that some of these reserves may be on private land. Depending on their conservation status, some could potentially be rezoned. Those that qualify for Level 1 protection (99-year term) cannot be rezoned. Tax relief applies as no land development is permitted. Level 2 carries a 10-year restriction that is renewable. Conservancies have no real protection.

A welcome outcome of the proclamation is that Strandfontein will be incorporated into the newly declared False Bay Nature Reserve on the basis of its endemic birds and Strandveld fynbos. It should be noted that this is a proclamation only and no finances are attached. The question is who is going to manage Strandfontein?

BLSA wants to develop a working partnership with the City and has sent letters of consent for each of the sites.

#### **COASTAL PROTECTION ZONE BY-LAW** (Dave Whitelaw)

Due to the high demand for coastal property, Cape Town's coastline has been extensively altered and affected by "strip" development. As a result its eco systems are increasingly under pressure. The City of Cape Town has drafted a by-law to safeguard the coastline and has called for public comment. The objective is to achieve a buffer zone above the high-water mark, limit coastal erosion and preserve the dune systems. Cognisance is taken also of global climate change predictions and rising water levels which are likely to impact on the coastline. The City is serious about implementing the by-law. **PAARL BIRD SANCTUARY** Concern has been expressed about the state of PBS. Grass on the sandbank island is so high that very little can be seen from the hide and reconstruction in progress has adversely affected some of the pans. Yvonne Weiss has responded that there is major reconstruction underway, entailing a large workforce and heavy trucks. A massive security fence is being planned between the works and the sanctuary, with new roads giving access to both. Until this has been completed, there will be disturbance for the birds. With regard to general upkeep, currently there is no manager and so far they have been unsuccessful in recruiting a replacement following the death of Norman Johnson. Engineer Ronald Brown is setting up a new Advisory Committee and WCBF has been invited to send a representative to one of their meetings.

#### **EVENTS**

**Launch of a New Bird Club on 22 February 2011:** Anne Gray reported that the **Flamingo Bird Club** was launched in Phillippi. This is an outreach initiative of the Cape Bird Club, chairs SCEA (Schaapkraal Civic Environmental Association), had approached Anne to help form a bird club in the area. SCEA is keen to promote an appreciation of the value of the Cape Flats wetlands and views the bird club as an opportunity to promote environmental education and awareness among youngsters and give them an interest after school. A committee of three was formed with Victor Stegman (Chairman), Nazeer Sondag (Hon. Secretary) and Delmain Williams (Hon. Treasurer).

The event, successfully organised by the FBC committee, took place at the club's newly acquired venue, the Schaapkraal Municipal Depot. It was well attended by local residents, representatives from Civic Associations and guests from the local farming community, bird clubs and scientific and environmental conservation organisations.

The main sponsors of the event were Edward Snell & Co. Ltd., the suppliers of Glendower Whisky, who donated R10,000 for the purchase of binoculars and bird field guides. Camera World gave 45% discount on the binoculars and volunteered support in the future.

FBC has tremendous potential for success and needs support in its development. It has a champion in Nazeer Sondag, and an enthusiastic committee that is passionate about birds, conservation and the environment. CBC will mentor the club as a satellite branch and both CBC and TBC have pledged support with outings, speakers and transport. Noted that the club needs a projector and Anne will approach Makro in this regard.

KH suggested that there is another community at Atlantis that could also offer opportunities for forming a bird club. There are people there who could be approached. KH will give names and contacts to Anne. **Action:** Keith Harrison / Anne Gray.

**ADU - 20th Anniversary Year:** The ADU entered its 20th year in December 2010. A programme of events has been drawn up to celebrate the event. On the calendar is a course "Birds & Climate Change" (23 July), that will be hosted by CBC. It was noted that Les Underhill retires at the end of the year.

**Kirstenbosch Biodiversity Expo 2011 5 - 8 May:** The event in its fourth year will coincide with National Bird Week. Xhosa speaking guides from Intaka Island will be there.

**Agulhas National Park Birding Weekend 4 - November):** The Honorary Rangers are once again running this popular event and Clubs are invited to include it in their calendars. The guest speaker will be Don Pinnock, travel writer, editor and “bemused” naturalist.

## FINANCES

Brian Dennis gave the Financial Report of Income and Expenditure for the year ending 31 December 2010 is attached to these minutes. Key items:

- Income: R15,550
- Expenditure: R 6,356
- Surplus at year end: R9,194

Income includes R2,670 which was contributed by Clubs following agreement that a voluntary contribution of R1 or R2 per member would be paid to WCBF funds for special projects. It is suggested that this continue on an annual basis, payable in January. Thanks are recorded to CBC, TBC, SWBC, Hermanus Bird Club and BLO for their contributions.

Brian Dennis will make application to BLSA for the 2011 allowance.

(Note: R7,000 has come through from BLSA, which brings WCBF funds in hand to R15,000.)

## GENERAL

**REPORT FROM THE OVERBERG** (Forwarded by Anton Odendal)

**Western Cape Birding Routes:** The “Bird Finder” brochure for the Overberg was launched at BLO’s golf day on 24 February and will be on sale at tourism offices, the “four points of entry” into the province (Stormsrivier, Beaufort West, Van Rhyndorp and CT International) and reputable accommodation establishments. This project, together with the publication of the third edition of the “Checklist of the Birds of the Overberg”, was fully sponsored by Tru-Cape Fruit Marketing and has been endorsed by Cape Town Routes Unlimited who also contributed funds. These brochures are being sold to discourage people and particularly children from taking them at expo’s, etc., and not putting them to good use. Income derived will be used to provide for the printing and distribution of later editions. Proposals for the development of similar brochures have been submitted to the Cape West Coast, Winelands, Central Karoo and Eden (Garden Route) District Municipalities. Partnerships are also being sought with private companies for funding.

**Development of Birding Resources for Environmental Education Centres in the Overberg:** Resources include lecture packs for teachers, illustrated educational posters and bird identification brochures that learners can take home. Pilot projects are at Agulhas and Bontebok National Parks and Potberg Centre at De Hoop. CapeNature wants to follow suit in their new financial year. The project is the only beneficiary of the second BLO golf day and further funding was granted by Cape Town Routes Unlimited.

**BLO Golf Day 2011:** In 2010, BirdLife Overberg became the first club in South Africa to raise funds for the conservation of birds and their habitats by staging a golf day. The focus fell on the African Penguin and R30,000 was raised and shared equally between BLSA’s Seabird Division, the Dyer Island Conservation Trust and SANCCOB. On 24 February, the club again presented a golf day at the Hermanus Golf Club, with the focus this year on the Verreaux’s Eagle. Funds raised will be for environmental education centres in the Overberg as indicated above. Members managed to raise prizes worth more than R40,000 for contestants. Some of the golfers requested registration forms to join BirdLife South Africa. Several teams have already expressed interest in next year’s event and it looks as if the BLO Golf Day is set to become a fixed date on the Western Cape golfing calendar.

## OTHER MATTERS

**Pull-up Poster for Clubs:** The Club / WCBF poster was featured at the Forum meeting. The poster gives the club identity and can be ordered through Anne Gray.

**Paardevelei (TW):** Plans are being formulated for a major development at Paardevelei. A big developer is involved and wants to use the concept that was put in place at Intaka Island.

**Betty's Bay Penguin Colony Site (TW):** The Ocean and Coasts section of the Department of Environmental Affairs is seeking funding of R9-million from the Tourism Division to upgrade the area. This will be a joint project with the Overstrand Municipality. A boardwalk will be constructed and an exhibition centre and restaurant built near what was the old whaling station.

**Bustard Project:** Niall Perrins has set himself the task of seeing 800 species of birds with a view to raising funds by way of sponsorship for research on the White-bellied Bustard. To date, he has raised R27,000

**World of Birds:** is in financial trouble as a result of reduced tourism over the past year. TW asked whether BLSA could assist as the facility does provide rehabilitation for injured birds. VH indicated that policy

guidelines have not been formulated for bird sanctuaries and rehabilitation centres. There are concerns attached, as they can be a cover for ulterior motives.

#### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING:**

**NEXT MEETING:** Saturday, June 11, at Durbanville Nature Reserve, time 9.30am for 10.00am, TBC hosting.

*Appendix to WCBF Minutes dated 05/03/2011.*

#### **Comments on possible rehabilitation of the Cerebos Site at Vredenburg by members of the CBC Conservation Committee 22rd January 2011**

Members: Cliff and Suretha Dorse, Felicity Ellmore, Shaun Overmeyer, Isabella Hayden, Frank Wygold, Dave Whitelaw.

Visit took place between 09H15 – 11H00, with permission of the security personnel at the site.

The following points were raised and discussed:

- i) The time lines involved in the closing of the site are important to plan the rehabilitation. There were several indications such as the recent construction of drainage canals, flattening of areas of bush, which suggest that closure may not be imminent.
- ii) The removal of the existing buildings needs to be considered as well as which organization would bear the costs.
- iii) The funds available under existing legislation for rehabilitation, as well as any further funds which could be raised, would be an important in determining the final "mix".
- iv) The "house keeping" of the site is not optimal (i.e. uncontained and untreated oil spills in various locations on site, litter etc.). If salt extraction is to continue for a significant period of time, then the company should be approached with a view to improving this. It may be necessary to involve the Dept of Mining and Energy. Their input (contact Jan Briers) may be valuable in improving the current situation as well as the rehabilitation of the site.
- v) There is a significant gradient between the level of the river and its branch and the pans. This becomes less obvious with proximity to the river. The possible implications of this observation will be discussed further under point vii.
- vi) We assumed that the extent of the site would make ongoing pumping of water to maintain the pans impractical in terms of the financial, logistic aspects and the sheer volume of water involved.
- vii) A hydrological survey would be essential, to assess several aspects including:
  - a) The period over which the high salt concentration would endure.
  - b) The effect of the presence of microflora/fauna which are currently present in some of the pans.



Microscopic examination of water sample revealed salt crystals as well as high concentrations of organisms too small to identify under a conventional microscope.

- c) The depth of the pans would be critical in determining whether ongoing retention of water was possible.
- d) The discrepancy in the height of the pans, particularly those at a distance from the river will present difficulty in maintaining any form of permanent water. It was suggested that these pans be returned to salt marsh. The walls of those closer to the river could be breached to allow continuity with the natural marshes. In addition the berms between these pans could be breached at either end. This would form islands to permit roosting and possibly breeding of birds such as cormorants.
- e) Sloping of some of the edges of the pans to ensure shallow edges for waders would be recommended.
- f) The remnant between the existing pans and the Berg river was noted as a valuable example of what the area should look like after rehabilitation.
- g) A hydrologist's assessment of the situation would be necessary as to whether this was possible. Our visit was in mid summer, and we may have underestimated the water level of the river. It is possible that a seasonal wetland could be formed.
- h) Selective bull dozing may be possible to effect retention of some of the pans.
- i) It is acknowledged that this is a very harsh environment that has been systematically degraded and manipulated for many years. The rehabilitation project would therefore be a long term investment and realistic timeframes would have to be applied to any rehabilitation and monitoring proposal.
- viii) The final determination on which areas can be maintained as wetland and which returns to salt marsh will be determined by 2 factors: The results of the hydrologist's assessment and the funds available. This is such an important site that should the hydrologist propose a solution for which the funds are not available, this committee would be prepared to approach BLSA and other bodies with a view to raising the necessary funds.

This visit left us with the impression that the need to rehabilitate was a high priority and attempts should be made to retain as much as is practical as wetland. From a practical point of view it is important to acknowledge that the effective rehabilitation of the saltmarshes would help restore & contribute to the ecological functioning of the estuary system as a whole. Therefore every additional section that can be restored would add to the greater good of the system. However there are currently too many unanswered questions to present any definite proposals at present.