

# Cape Parrot Newsletter

Number 10 - October 2010



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## Cape Parrot Big Birding Day 2011

As diaries start to fill for 2011, please may you book Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> May and Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> May for our **fourteenth** Cape Parrot Big Birding Day (CPBBD). This year's count is particularly important if the Psittacine Beak and Feather Virus outbreaks are widespread and affecting the population greatly. Please contact Prof Downs or one of the co-ordinators in your area. The CPBBD report for 2010 is available at <http://biology.ukzn.ac.za/cpwg.html>.

## Conferences

- During June Prof Colleen Downs was a plenary speaker at the fifth International Frugivore and Seed Dispersal (FSD) Symposium in Montpellier France. Here many interesting presentations on the role of frugivores in seed dispersal were presented. See <http://www.fsd2010.org/> for more details. Prof Downs will be hosting the sixth FSD in 2015 at St Lucia, KwaZulu-Natal.



## 25th International Ornithological Congress

22-28 August 2010  
Campos do Jordão, SP, BRAZIL



- Dr Shernice Soobramoney presented a talk on African Parrots at the International Ornithological Congress in Campos do Jordão, Brazil in September 2010. At this conference she and Prof Downs attended a meeting where Dr Juan F. Masello led a discussion to get the formation of the Parrot Researchers Group under the auspices of the International Ornithological Union to promote dialogue among parrot researchers and promote parrot conservation.

## Nesting in the Wild

It is that time of year now when Cape Parrots usually nest in the wild across their range and are often seen flying as pairs or as singles to nest sites. They do breed at other times of the year if conditions are favourable and one observer had the opportunity to watch a pair at a nest site at CPBBD 2010 in the forest patch shown below. Cape Parrots usually choose a dead tree (known as a snag) from which they have a good vantage point. However, as Cape Parrots are reliant on there already being some sort of hole, i.e. they are secondary cavity nesters, they may use other sites. We have a paucity of knowledge on the nest sites and so over the years have built up a database of nest sites and their usage. We would be grateful if you could report any nest sites you find or suspect to Prof Downs. These data are confidential as in recent years there have been reports of nestlings being removed from nests. We would also urge observers to keep an eye on the nests and report any suspicious activities. One of the keen parrot observers recently found a new nest in southern KZN and we hope to report on the success of this in the next newsletter.

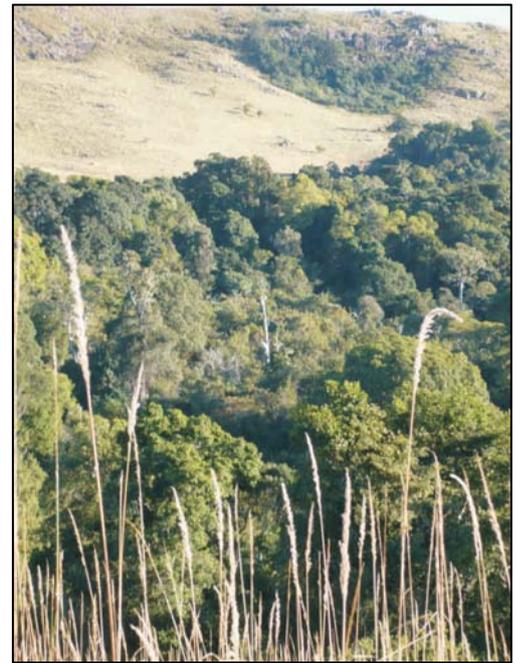


Figure 1. The nesting site of a Cape Parrot pair seen on the CPBBD 2010.

## Research

- ✦ Dr Graham Grieve (UKZN) is busy working with Prof Downs on a Cape Parrot habitat and foraging project in the Eastern Cape (EC) and KZN: a study that is running in parallel with an equivalent study in the Amatole region. He has been monitoring fruit availability on a monthly basis in different sized forest patches, which has been quite an arduous task. During 2010, the EC has continued to have a 2<sup>nd</sup> year of drought. KZN has also had little rain during March-September 2010, with some areas recording the driest months in 100 years. It is interesting to see how this affects fruiting of indigenous species. We are grateful for any anecdotal information on movements of Cape Parrots and what fruit species they are feeding on. This helps piece together what birds are doing in different areas at different times of the year. Large flocks have been seen drinking at water sites during winter. From December-February, birds in the EC and KZN traditionally made feeding forays to the coast, but with the loss of coastal forests they are now sometimes seen in orchards. Please let us know if you see birds during this time either feeding or at a locality.

## Alien Invasive Parrots

We are often phoned or emailed about people seeing Cape Parrots in their gardens, but these turn out to be Rose-ringed or Ring-necked Parakeets (*Psittacula krameri*). They are the most widely introduced parrot in the world with breeding populations in 35 countries, spanning five continents. In cities like London their numbers have increased dramatically in recent years. Although mainly in Gauteng and the greater Durban area, they are extending their range in KZN. See the latest SABAP map at: [http://sabap2.adu.org.za/species\\_maps.php?Spp=941](http://sabap2.adu.org.za/species_maps.php?Spp=941).

## Identification of Cape Parrots Guides

TRAFFIC has been busy developing a Powerpoint presentation for the South African National Biodiversity Institute on how to identify a Cape Parrot and differentiate between similar species. This is used to inform staff at border posts (including airports and harbours), police, and conservation officials of the species to try and prevent illegal trade. For further information contact Tess Rayner at the Endangered Wildlife Trust (email: [tessr@ewt.org.za](mailto:tessr@ewt.org.za)).

## Captive Birds

William Horsfield has reported that the pair of Cape Parrots on loan to him from the CPWG as part of the captive breeding programme, have produced four chicks of which three have survived, during September-October 2010. His comments: "Four chicks from four eggs and all being fed nicely. The chicks have a fair amount of regurgitated material stuck to their bodies which I suspect can impact on their insulation in cold weather as it makes the down matted. However, the chicks are continually brooded by the female and so heat loss isn't an issue. When she leaves the nest they all huddle together to conserve body heat, as seen in the picture." Once the chicks have fledged and weaned they will be surgically sexed.

Shaun Wilkinson, the Cape Parrot Stud Book Keeper, is now based at the new breeding centre at Monte Casino in Johannesburg. Any breeders of Cape Parrots are requested to update him on any chicks bred in captivity this last year to keep the studbook up to date.



a.



b.

Figure 2. Nestlings of the captive pair in the breeding facility of William Horsfield during a. September and b. October 2010.

## Papegaai Wyn (Parrot Wine)

Adi Badenhorst of Badenhorst Family Wines, Malmesbury, has kindly donated wine for funds for Cape Parrot Research. He can be contacted at [adi@iafrica.com](mailto:adi@iafrica.com) to purchase a 2007 Red with Parrot labels. These would make a nice present for a parrot enthusiast. See their website at [www.aabadenhorst.com](http://www.aabadenhorst.com).

## Festive Season Gifts

We have a DVD of the Cape Parrot Programme produced by Don Guy for 50/50 for sale (R50). This is informative and useful for school projects.

There are still reprints (size 60 x 45 cm, see below) of the Cape Parrot painting by Ingrid Fouche available.



Figure 3. Ingrid Fouche's painting of Cape Parrots.

## Dead Birds

With a species such as Cape Parrots whose numbers are low, any dead bird is of concern. Worldwide in recent years there has been an increase in the amount of disease in wild animal populations. As part of the continued monitoring of Cape Parrots in the wild, particularly if death is from being shot or from the possible outbreak of the Psittacine Beak and Feather Virus, we are grateful for any information on dead birds. If possible, please freeze the dead bird, take it to a veterinarian, or bring it to the School of Biological & Conservation Sciences (Pietermaritzburg campus), as soon as possible so that an autopsy can be done and samples collected for analyses.

## Latest Newsflash

On 2 November 2010 Malcolm Gemmell sms'ed at 06h00 with the following: "Adult male (ring right leg) at 05h45 + 8 friends Xalingena. Possibly Victoria's brother?". This is exciting news and relates to the Cape Parrot chicks ringed in the wild in 2001 (see last newsletter for details and also detailed in the DVD that is for sale). The male observed by Malcolm was one of the chicks that was ringed at the nest then.

## Contact Details

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