

Cape Parrot Newsletter

Number 5 - August 2007



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A Word from the Editor

Hi All

Here is the 5th Cape Parrot Newsletter, this issue includes items on the 10th Cape Parrot Big Birding Day and feedback from the CPWG AGM. A request for help from Bill Bainbridge, an update on the CP with the broken beak (header photo) and a report from the BirdLife Trogons. I would like to thank all those who have contributed something to this issue. It is always a task finding things to include and it is really great to be able to include some both current and interesting items in this issue. If you have any items of interest please do consider writing something, accompanying photos also are always of interest, it will be much appreciated.

All the best, Tee

Cape Parrot Big Birding Day: Colleen Downs

Again I am most grateful to all those of you that assisted, particularly the co-ordinators in the different areas. I think we can be proud that we have done this for 10 years and that many of you have loyally been involved over this time. I think the greatest value has been increased awareness of Cape Parrots and of their forest habitat. I am collating the data for the 10 year period to produce more detailed distribution maps, and to model the population dynamics. I hope to produce manuscripts that will assist in conservation management.



Students from UKZN on CPBBD

"The continuation of the CPBBD for 10 years is a notable milestone"

Colleen T. Downs

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The following are extracts from the report, the full document can be downloaded from the CPWG web site or requested from Colleen.

This year marked the tenth anniversary of the Cape Parrot Big Birding Day (CPBBD). Numerous teams of observers were strategically placed in forests in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo provinces in the hope of spotting some Cape Parrots. With the help of so many generous volunteers donating their time over the weekend of the 5th - 6th May, the 10th annual count was well supported and efficient. The weather was comparatively warmer than in previous years. Most importantly, the days were clear at many of the observation sites allowing for the best possible chance of observing Cape Parrots.

	2006 am	2006 pm	2007 am	2007 pm
KZN	410	386	295	193
Transkei	415	315	265	129
Former E.Cape	409	402	129	198
Limpopo	88	5	35	22

Table 1: Comparison of Cape Parrots seen different regions during 2006 and 2007



One of the Count Sites

The CPBBD's primary aim is to estimate population numbers of Cape Parrots in the wild. These data collected by the observers are also later used to be analysed distribution patterns and to estimate population viability. The continuation of the CPBBD for 10 years is a notable milestone. Each year, the number of Cape Parrots observed in the wild has increased. However, this year has seen a marked decrease in numbers of Cape Parrots seen despite the number of observers



remaining similar to those participating in recent years.

This year 252 volunteers were posted at 94 observation points in the three provinces. 542 parrots were seen during the afternoon count while 724 were seen the following morning (Table 1). Numbers are significantly lower than last year, however, in 2006 the numbers were up substantially from previous years suggesting that some parrots were counted more than once i.e. over estimated.

This decrease highlights the need for continued studies of this species to ensure that any threats to the population (and its sub-populations) are identified. Adding to this we need to understand the movements of Cape Parrot between forest sites in order to better

understand their ecology. This should be realized in the next few years with the recent donation of funds from the World Parrot Trust.

"This year 252 volunteers were posted at 94 observation points in the three provinces."

This new research will focus on improving our understanding of Cape Parrot distribution and demography in the northern Eastern Cape region, as well as improving our understanding of Afrotropical forest ecosystem dynamics.

REMINDER: Next CAPE PARROT BIG BIRDING DAY

The 11th CPBBD will be held in 2008 on the Saturday afternoon of the 3rd May and the morning of the Sunday 4th May.

Link to Full CPBBD Report: www.cpwg.unp.ac.za/CPBBD2007.html

Port Shepstone Lions' Show 2007: Barry Porter

BirdLife Trogons have been involved in the annual Cape Parrot count for many years. Although this activity is a very useful way to keep tabs on population trends, it was decided that the club should try to take positive steps to assist this endangered endemic bird in a more constructive manner. On consultation with Prof. Colleen Downs, Trogons pledged to monitor the ten newly erected Cape Parrot nest boxes at Ngele Forest. This task has subsequently been meticulously performed by dedicated Trogons members, and has involved a huge amount of time and expense, as well as a lot of travelling.

"Trogons are heavily involved with Cape Parrot and Blue Swallow conservation action..."

"Trogons pledged to monitor the ten newly erected Cape Parrot nest boxes at Ngele Forest"

For the past three years BirdLife Trogons have retained a stand at



BirdLife Trogons Stand

the Port Shepstone Lions' show. The show was held from the 13th to the 15th of July this year. The club is also involved in an inter-School's Bird Art competition, open to primary schools on the K.Z.N. South Coast. Every year, school children are allotted the task of producing

artwork depicting selected endangered birds. Generous prizes, sponsored by NPC/CIMPOR, are awarded to the winners in each category.

(R 1000.00 for best overall artist, lesser amounts for first, second, third and highly commended



pictures. and R 3000.00 for the school with the most points).

The Cape Parrot was one of the subjects in the 2006 art competition. This year the three

endangered birds selected for the art competition were, the Blue Swallow, Wattled Crane and Black-rumped Buttonquail. A sample of the artwork was displayed at the Trogons stand at the Lions' show. The purpose of the competition is to foster an awareness of the plight of our endangered birds amongst the primary school children of southern K.Z.N. This year 27000 children were involved in the competition. Over the three years that it has been running, about 52000 youngsters have been exposed to the predicament of South Africa's endangered bird species via their participation in the bird art competition.

Trogons are heavily involved with Cape Parrot and Blue Swallow conservation action, a pamphlet containing information on these two endangered birds was distributed at the 2007 show, and the posters

"about 52000 youngsters have been exposed to the predicament of South Africa's endangered bird species via their participation in the bird art competition"

obtained from the Cape Parrot working group were displayed as educational material. A large hollow log was fashioned into a look-alike Cape Parrot nest box to demonstrate the concept of creating artificial nesting sites to the public. Hundreds of curious people visited the stand during the three days on show, and all were made aware of the dilemma of the Cape Parrot and other endangered South African birds.

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CPWG AGM: Mike Perrin

The CPWG AGM, held on 30 June, 2007 at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg was successful. Mike Perrin presented his chairman's report which largely reviewed events during the past two years, a period in which BirdLife SA withdrew its financial support for the CPWG's co-ordinator, Kate Henderson, thereby restricting its activities. He indicated that the CPWG executive committee is fully committed to meeting its goals and was aware of the need for better communication with its membership which is now being addressed, particularly through the CPWG Web Site, the CP Newsletter and the AGM. At the AGM, BLSA iterated its wish to work with the CPWG especially in relation to community-based field-oriented field projects in the Eastern Cape. Later in the meeting, Mike commented that new national legislation would go a long way in monitoring and controlling trade in Cape Parrots in South Africa. The BLSA is also raising funds for CP conservation through

their "Adopt a Cape Parrot" programme, this is greatly appreciated and acknowledged.

Shaun Wilkinson presented an update on the Cape Parrot Stud Book, indicating that information on more than 200 birds has been collated from 18 aviculturists and breeders. Nevertheless, further information is needed, to update recent breeding successes, and to get on board those who have not yet participated.

"There is no room for complacency in protecting these rare and endangered birds scattered across fragmented forests, which are themselves threatened."

Kate Meares reviewed and thanked Dr Tee Taylor for creating this Newsletter, which was so timely and necessary, and which has been a great success. Other articles are appearing in the popular and scientific press. Kate also presented Tee's report on forensic genetics and conservation of the

Cape Parrot, and the development of genetic markers for the Cape Parrot undertaken by Kerry Pillay. Through individual identification of birds and parentage analysis, illegal trading can be deterred and prosecuted and legal captive birds protected.

Daniel Marnewick reviewed the activities of the BLSA community project at Chata Forest in the E Cape which includes participation in the annual CPWG census of Cape Parrots, tree planting and the development of ecotourism. Prof Colleen Downs reported on the tenth Cape Parrot Big Birding Day, saying that although numbers were elevated in last year's count, and reduced this year, the long term average suggests a population of about 1 000 birds in the wild. There is no room for complacency in protecting these rare and endangered birds scattered across fragmented forests, which are themselves threatened. Coll was upbeat about the recent successes with wild Cape Parrots breeding in

artificial nest boxes, although bees remain a problem.

Livio Heath presented an excellent talk on advances in research into psittacine beak and feather disease (PBFDV), including the possible testing and production of a vaccine, which has very great significance for the future of Cape Parrots. Michael Cunningham was constructive in his presentation in

showing how the data captured by Colleen and her team during the ten annual censuses might be used to further advance our understanding of the population dynamics and distribution of Cape Parrots through mathematical modelling, which was endorsed by Prof Steven Piper.

In general discussion, it was agreed that the CPWG should work with

Umgano Project: Bill Bainbridge

ecotourism and avitourism groups in establishing guidelines that would prevent the disturbance of Cape Parrots in the wild, especially near their breeding sites.

Contact Mike Perrin

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I am part of the team working for the Mabantla Traditional Authority on a development programme on land in their custody, known as the Umgano Project. We have been involved with this project for over a decade. Mr Malcolm Gemmell has been undertaking avifaunal assessments within the area for us, which seem to indicate that the forests of the Natural Zone and the State Forests contain breeding populations of Cape Parrot. We hope to give special emphasis to the protection of this population, because of the present precarious status of this species, but also as part of a potential tourism resource base for the low-key hospitality initiative that the community is considering implementing. We hope that the parrots would form a key attraction for visitors to the area.

"avifaunal assessments within the area seem to indicate that the forests of the Natural Zone and the State Forests contain breeding populations of Cape Parrot."

The Project Area, some 7 000 ha in extent, is located in the southern Drakensberg between Ntsikeni and Coleford Nature Reserves, in the Ngwangwane Valley. The study area was formerly in the Eastern Cape, but has recently been transferred to KZN Province. Within the Project Area is an area of conservation-worthy biodiversity, including high altitude grasslands, Protea savanna, wetlands, mountain Podocarpus forest, that has been



Umgano Forest Area

identified as a Natural Zone. A planning exercise is presently underway in order that special conservation management attention may be given to it. Portions of two of the Podocarpus forests have been in formal legal protection as State Forest for over a hundred years (Umgano and KwaHoha SFs, which were proclaimed in 1904), but the area of forest in the custody of the Traditional Authority is greater than these two protected areas.

"We would be very interested in hearing from people who would be willing to work with us in preparing the management guidelines for Cape Parrots (or other key species) for our IMP."

The Traditional Authority recently applied for membership of the Biodiversity Stewardship Programme of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife for the project area, and it is pleasing to report that the Natural Zone : Conservation has been awarded Nature Reserve status and the Natural Zone : Livestock Management has been offered Biodiversity Agreement Area status. The proposed NR contains biodiversity which is considered to be irreplaceable, and the area provides important ecosystem services.



iNkosi Baleni speaking during an iMbizo



Part of the iMbizo festivities

area to be considered for designation as an Important Bird Area.

An important part of our terms of reference as consultants to the community, is the preparation of an Integrated Management Plan (IMP) for the Natural Zone. As a

component of the IMP, we will be preparing protocols, or management guidelines in collaboration with staff of EKZNW, for specific Red Data or species of high nature conservation value. Included will be Cape Parrots, the Ground Hornbills, as well the Drakensberg Cycad, *Encephalartos ghellinckii* (although there are, of course, a number of other key attractor species). Our aim is to define best-practice management recommendations for the long-term conservation of the most important of these key species, including the Umgano Cape Parrot population.

We would be very interested in hearing from people who would be willing to work with us in preparing the management guidelines for Cape Parrots (or other key species) for our IMP. I would add that such a document might be of relevance for other communities who have indigenous forests (and therefore Cape Parrots) in their areas. We have requested EKZNW to organise a workshop in collaboration with people with expertise in this area who might be willing to assist us to compile guidelines.

"Our aim is to define best-practice management recommendations for the long-term conservation of the most important of these key species"

I look forward to your response. Any comment would be welcome.

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Amongst the development initiatives currently under consideration for these two areas, is the development of various forms of community-based nature and culture tourism, at low scale, with avitourism as one of the attractions. Amongst the important bird species present are Southern Ground Hornbills and Cape Parrots. Malcolm Gemmel is of the opinion that breeding populations of parrots are present. We hope that our area will be listed as a birding destination on the proposed Sisonke Birding Route, which is currently in the design stage. We have also motivated to BirdlifeSA for the

Update: Chick with Broken Beak: Lillian Davies

In a previous newsletter I spoke of the clutch of wild Cape Parrot chicks that were monitored up to fledging in July 2001. During their development, the female chick, was found to have lost weight and had suffered serious injuries to her beak. Concerned that the damage might cause feeding problems later, especially given the importance of the beak in obtaining its natural diet, the female chick was taken into captivity. The other two chicks successfully fledged in the wild.

Lillian Davies now provides an update to how 'Vicky', as the young female was named, is doing five years later. Lillian has also provided a photo Vicky as she is today

Vicky was brought to L & T Bird Farm by the CPWG and settled in well to captivity. She has turned into a well adjusted parrot, a little shy, but doing very well. Although

her beak has never grown to a sharp point, as is usual in parrots, she has no problem cracking open sunflower seeds and enjoys her meals immensely. If one looks at her very quickly her beak is not noticeable at all. It is only when looking at her in relation to another parrot that one notices the tip of her beak is missing.

"Although her beak has never grown to a sharp point, as is usual in parrots, she has no problem cracking open sunflower seeds ..."

She is fed a mixture of vegetables and fruit together with cooked peas, sorghum, barley, juga beans, mealies, samp and soaked moongh beans. To this mixture is added a little sunflower seed, budgie mix and supplements.



*Vicky
Left chick, above adult.*

She has been set up with a very nice mate but to-date has shown no inclination to breed. She may well be a little too young still. We will give her another opportunity this year and if nothing develops we will give thought to swapping males to see if another male is more compatible with her.

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Mike Reynolds - Obituary by Mike Perrin

I first met Mike Reynolds at a meeting of the world's leading parrot people that he and Rod Hall convened in London to start the Parrot Action Plan process. I was immediately impressed and my respect for him and his contribution to the conservation of parrots globally has grown continually.



Caribbean Islands and then at sites around the world. At the CPWG & UKZN, we were delighted that the WPT was able to support Olaf Wirminghaus's work on the ecology and conservation of Cape Parrots in South Africa and Louise Warburton's on the Black-cheeked Lovebird in Zambia.

Mike Reynolds personally instigated the creation of the Parrot Action Plan, which is a working document that outlines threats to parrots in general and outlines and sets a course of action for their recovery. It set a policy which the WPT and other conservation groups continue to follow today. Not satisfied with that achievement, Mike initiated a campaign to end the import of wild parrots for the European pet Trade, which included World Parrot Day in May 2004. With the support of over 200 NGOs and the European commission, his tenacity paid off, and imports have been banned from 1 July 2007.

Contact Mike Perrin

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"At the CPWG & UKZN, we were delighted that the WPT was able to support Olaf Wirminghaus's work on the ecology and conservation of Cape Parrots"

After serving in the British army, Mike worked in advertising agencies in the early days of television. In 1973, Mike opened Bird Paradise, later renamed Paradise Park, at Glanmor House in Cornwall in the UK. This provided an excellent opportunity to educate the general public about the conservation of wild animals, particularly parrots, and was to become the home of the World Parrot Trust. In 1989, Mike established the WPT with the aim of preserving parrots in the wild

and ensuring the welfare of captive birds. Under his guidance the Trust has grown into a conservation powerhouse with representation in ten countries, thousands of members and parrot conservation projects around the world.

The pioneering work of the WPT focused on aiding and funding the conservation of the Echo Parakeet in Mauritius, which has been a great success story despite a string of problems. Subsequent developments addressed issues with the conservation of parrots in the

Some text taken from "End of an era" PsittaScene, May 2007, Photo from: news.bbc.co.uk/
World Parrot Trust: www.worldparrottrust.org/news/mike_reynolds.htm

SA Environmental Outlook Report

The SA Environmental Outlook (SAEO, formerly the State of Environment Report) was released by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) recently.

Among the key findings of the report are that "In general, the condition of the South African environment is deteriorating. Increasing pollution and declining air quality are harming people's health. Natural resources are being exploited in an unsustainable way, threatening the functioning of ecosystems. Water quality and the health of aquatic ecosystems are

declining. Land degradation remains a serious problem." and "there are increasing pressures on our natural systems, and our ability to deal with these pressures is weak."

"The report identifies the condition of, and trends within various key sectors of South Africa's environment; all are either deteriorating and/or in a critical condition"

The Director General of DEAT, Ms Pam Yako, said the "government acknowledges and takes note of the report... Even though the report was commissioned by government, the

views expressed in the report are not necessarily those of government and do not report only on government performance as it relates to the environment". "Whilst the report outlined a general decline in the state of the environment, in line with various other assessments, we are confident that our response strategy to these issues will continue to ensure that our country is a leader in sound environmental management and sustainable resource use" She added that the report had been generated over the past 2.5 years and that there had

been major developments during that time.

Several NGO's (EWT, WWF-SA, Wilderness Foundation-SA & WESSA) have issued comments on its contents and the governments response to this report. They suggest that given its correlation with other environmental reports the SAOE presents a disturbing but realistic picture.

The SAEO (2006), provides a critical analysis of the state of South Africa's natural resource-base representing an independent, objective, scientifically credible review of the opportunities and constraints to growth and development in South Africa posed by its natural resource base.

The NGO's state "The report identifies the condition of, and trends within various key sectors of South Africa's environment; all are either deteriorating and/or in a critical condition. For example,

water resources continue to decline in quality and quantity. SA will experience a dire shortage of water by 2025, with local shortages already apparent. However, despite predictions that climate change will

"The DEAT's targets for biodiversity conservation, ecosystem protection and resource management cannot be met if conflicted by targets in other sectors"

further reduce SA's already scant rainfall on the western side of the country, as well as reduced river flows, we continue to contribute to the drivers of climate change by producing more greenhouse gases per capita than many industrial countries. The report shows that since 1991, the ecological footprint of South Africans has increased by 2%, overtaking the global average by 0.5%!"

"To illustrate, a large part of ASGISA is premised on expanding

irrigation schemes, developing extensive biofuel crops and bulk water supply schemes in a water scarce country where the focus should be on catchment management and improved water resource management. The environmental sector is dismissed in ASGISA as "unnecessarily hampering" growth..."

"The DEAT's targets for biodiversity conservation, ecosystem protection and resource management cannot be met if conflicted by targets in other sectors such as, for example, mining, water provision (through often inappropriate bulk water provision schemes) and so on."

The government questions the validity of some of the data used in the report, however, the NGOs point out that this was scientifically referenced data often from the governments own organisations.

The NGOs full comment can be seen: www.ewt.org.za/news_fullstory.aspx?status=0&newsID=428

The SAEO report can be downloaded from

www.environment.gov.za/HotIssues/2006/staeoftheenvironment2006/StateOfTheEnvironment2006.html#

Web Sites of Interest:

I have included a few web sites that may be of interest (please let me know of others):

The **Cape Parrot Working Group Web Site:** www.cpwg.unp.ac.za Email: CapeParrot@ukzn.ac.za

You can view back copies of the **Cape Parrot Newsletters** at www.cpwg.unp.ac.za/CPNewsletter2.html

World Parrot Trust: www.parrots.org

The Parrot Action Plan: www.parrots.org/index.php/ourpublication/parrotactionplan/

The EU Trade Ban Campaign: www.parrots.org/index.php/ourwork/pp_eustradeban/

The Cape Parrot has featured on several **50/50 TV programmes** 2007: www.5050.co.za/inserts.asp?ID=7679

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You can view back copies of the **Cape Parrot Newsletters** at www.cpwg.unp.ac.za/CPNewsletter2.html

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