

Cape Parrot Newsletter

Number 8 - February 2009

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A Word from the Editor

Hi Everyone

Sorry for the really long gap between newsletters this time. I was travelling around much of last year and barely seemed to touch the ground when I was off again. I am back in Pietermaritzburg now and it is good to be in one place again - but the downside is that my list of things I really want to do has piled high.

The Cape Parrot Working Group is very active again and are going to putting a regular newsletter together to keep you updated with activities surrounding the Cape Parrot.

With regard to the items in this newsletter I should warn you that some are a bit out of date now but I am including them as they still hopefully have interest.

A reminder for all who are interested it is nearly time for the Cape Parrot count again in May!

My thanks to all of you who have sent me items for the newsletter, as well as all of you who have enjoyed reading it! I have really enjoyed communicating with you over the past couple of years and wish you all an excellent 2009. Tee

Cape Parrot Working Group Newsletter

I will pass the list of all current subscribers to this newsletter on to the CPWG. If you are not on the list and wish to be placed on it please contact the CPWG at:
Email: CapeParrot@ukzn.ac.za

Cape Parrot Genetic Markers - Tee Taylor

My interest in the Cape parrot began from my previous research work developing genetic markers to detect illegal trade in other species of parrots. This led to my coming to UKZN to run a research project aimed at developing similar genetic markers for the Cape parrot and blue crane. as well as providing some training to the wildlife authorities in the use of DNA in detecting and prosecuting illegal wildlife trade.

The genetic markers for each of the species were developed by two MSC students at UKZN. Kate Meares (Kate also acted as the CPWG co-ordinator for a while) developed the markers for the blue crane, and Kerusha Pillay developed the markers for the Cape parrot. The overall project is now complete and I am pleased to say that genetic markers that can be used to confirm the identity of individual

birds and can confirm parentage are now available.

The project would not have been possible without the people who assisted in securing samples for this work. I would like to express my thanks to a number of breeders who went out of their way to provide DNA samples to developing this research. Also to Craig Symes who has also provided samples from a number of sources.

BirdLife SA Community Baised Conservation Newsletter

The BirdLife SA Community Baised Conservation newsletter includes a piece by Monde Ntshudu about Participatory Forest Management for Cape Parrots. It reports that a group of stakeholders met in August to elect Steering Committee Members for Participatory Forest Management (PFM) in the Cata forests, part of the Amothole Mistbelt IBA.

It was felt that the forest was being utilised in an unsustainable manner and that this was impacting negatively on a variety of wildlife including the Cape Parrot. The PFM agreed that in order to manage and save Cape Parrots and other wild life in Cata, proper management measures need to be developed and implemented.

The Steering Committee is aiming to develop a Participatory Forest Management Plan to address forest use concerns.

More details can be found at :

www.blsacommunityconservation.org.za

Email address if you wish to subscribe to the BirdLife SA Community newsletter: community@birdlife.org.za

Cape Parrot Relatedness - Tee Taylor

Following on from my student Kerry's work with the Cape parrot I have started to look at other potential research with the genetic markers we developed.

Recently I have started looking at the genetic similarity between individual Cape Parrots within the

captive Cape Parrot population. It is rather interesting work as using genetic profiles I can look at things such as the degree of genetic similarity between two individuals, and within collections of animals, which is potentially very useful when considering pairing birds for

breeding.

Any breeders who would like to hear more about this please do get in contact with me details of your birds would remain anonymous unless you wished otherwise.

Email taylor@ukzn.ac.za

Cape Parrot Studbook

I would just like to send a reminder to everyone who keeps Cape Parrots about the Cape Parrot studbook run by Shaun Wilkinson.

For those of you who have already registered to make sure you send in all the updated details asap so that Shaun can keep the studbook up to date.

The studbook also has the capacity to provide very useful data relating to inbreeding co-efficients by keeping a record of, and being able to analyse, the complexities of

relatedness between the individuals within it. So as you can see the studbook is also of great interest to me as it has the potential to provide a whole host of interesting information above and beyond relatedness and inbreeding but also about other dynamics within the captive population. However, before it is possible to use the information within the studbook it is important to get definitive data on ID, parentage, hatch dates and so forth. I'm sure that all of those

within the studbook will benefit considerably from such information once the sufficient up-to-date and reliable information is available within it.

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Yellowwood Case Concluded In The High Court - Rod Potter

The case resulted from the cutting down of the 86 huge yellowwood trees, some with diameters up to 2m wide and aged between 300 and 400 years old, in the Gongqo-Gongqo State Forest in November 2001. The Circuit High Court in Umzimkhulu, yesterday handed down sentence to the accused in this matter which has been heard in the High Court over the past 4 years.

The presiding judge was Justice J Miller and the accused were represented as follows: Mr Tobie Barnard represented Morne

Terblanche (35) and Pierre Terblanche (39) and their father, Victor Terblanche (65). Mr Mbele represented Chief Wilson Ntlabathi (66); Eric Sithole (58) and Siphwe Satywa (68). The Terblanche's are from the Mooi

River area although all of them have now left the timber business as a result of this case and have taken



up various other occupations. The other three accused are the Chief, Secretary and Treasurer of the Malenge Tribal Authority in the

Umzimkhulu area. The Investigating officer was Mr. Rod Potter of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife who was requested by DWAF to assist in this investigation shortly after the incident was discovered. The prosecutor in the case was Advocate Nigel Carpenter of Umtata office of the National Prosecuting Authority.

The accused were all convicted of serious offences and the court noted that they were unable to pay any fine commensurate with the seriousness of the incident and therefore a term of direct imprisonment was appropriate.

All the accused were convicted of fraud resulting from false documentation drawn up to attempt to legitimise the felling of the trees. They were all sentenced to 8 years imprisonment (of which 3 years was suspended for five years).



The accused were all found guilty of various statutory offences under the Forestry Act involving the cutting down of indigenous protected trees, from within a natural forest, being the Gongqo-Gongqo State Forest. The Terblanche's were directly involved with these activities and were sentenced to 3 years imprisonment, while the members of the Malenge Tribal Authority were found to be accessories to the crime and were sentenced to 2 years (all suspended). The effective term of imprisonment is therefore 8 years for the Terblanche's and 5 years for the other accused.

The value of the cut logs was estimated to be R389 000 while the value of the timber had these logs been sawn into planks could have

been in the region of R6m. The value of the fraud committed was such that the accused were sentenced in terms of the Minimum Sentences Act which allowed for a minimum of 15 years imprisonment. However the Court found compelling circumstances in mitigation of sentence and the accused received lighter sentences.



The court noted that although the value of the logs could be estimated, the value of the damage to the forest environment was incalculable. Evidence in aggravation of sentence was lead, highlighting the sensitive nature of the forest ecosystem which only covers 0,4% of the country, its value in providing important free services to the people in storing greenhouse gases and the number of species completely dependent on such forests, for example the endangered cape parrot. It was further noted that although rehabilitation of the forest was theoretically possible, that would take many decades of careful management intervention and that realistically, the damage was irreparable.

Council for the Defence were granted leave to appeal both the conviction and the sentence. The State was granted leave to appeal the sentence, believing that there were sufficient



aggravating factors which enabled a greater sentence to be imposed. This matter will be heard in the Supreme Court of Appeal in Bloemfontein next year. The accused were all granted bail pending the outcome of the appeal.

"The result must act as a deterrent to any person contemplating similar crimes in the future, and as such, it is right that the State strives to achieve the greatest appropriate punishment in this landmark case" - said Rod Potter, Chairman of the KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife Crime Working Group. He further stated that 'we wanted to set a precedent which could be used to protect the remaining natural forest patches in South Africa, and in concluding this complicated and protracted investigation and court case, I believe that we achieved our goal. This case is the first of its kind in the country, both in the magnitude of the offence and seriousness of the damage to the forest, comparable to environmental rape'.



Contact: Rod Potter Email: rpotter@kznwildlife.com

Pictures supplied by Rod Potter and the CPWG

Cape Parrot Big Birding Day 2008 - Colleen Downs

(The whole report can be obtained from Colleen - I have edited down the original document here: TT)

This eleventh Cape Parrot Big Birding Day (CPPBD) had numerous teams of observers strategically placed in or near forests in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo provinces at at least 112 observation sites in the hope of spotting Cape Parrots. It is very important that the range of the parrot is well covered as these birds are highly mobile and are often described as food nomadics. Consequently, it is expected that in some areas birds will not be seen on the census day. However, the nil returns are especially important to show that the range was covered and highlights where birds were not present that year. 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 analyse distribution patterns and to estimate population viability. In previous years I have been concerned that we are not covering forests in the former Transkei (now part of the Eastern Cape Province) adequately. This year there were observers in the Mt Frere and Ngcobo areas and which was important in extending the coverage.

In addition to recording the numbers of Cape Parrots, observers record the presence of other rare bird and mammal species. As a result, the distributional data captured for Samango Monkeys (*Cercopithecus mitis*) and Southern

Ground Hornbills (*Bucorvus leadbeateri*) will be mapped, thereby contributing much needed information on the distribution of these endangered species. Interestingly this year, two groups of observers saw honey badgers (*Mellivora capensis*) and another group an African Wild Cat (*Felis silvestris*).

Results for 2008

This year at least 283 volunteers were posted at 112 observation points in the three provinces. At least 1136 parrots were seen during the afternoon count while 1163 were seen the following morning (Table 1). Numbers were higher than last year but similar to other years. Observers saw parrots at 62% of the localities for both the Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning respectively (Table 1). The weather was mixed with most experiencing cold, wind and rain at some point over the weekend. The variability in results between years and the discrepancy between the morning and afternoon counts result from many factors including poor weather, double counting, and inadequate coverage. Also, when birds are concentrated at feeding sites, they give a false impression of abundance and there is a chance they are counted twice. Sadly we do not know what proportion of these are adult and the ratio of males to females as most sightings are when the birds are flying and difficult to identify sex or age.

Table 1. Summary of results of the Cape Parrot Big Birding Day 2008 by area.

| Area | Morning | Evening |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| Boston | 4 | 12 |
| Bulwer | 62 | 95 |
| Byrne | 3 | 0 |
| Dargle | 34 | 27 |
| Karkloof | 11 | 3 |
| Creighton (KZN) | 404 | 378 |
| Creighton (Trans) | 32 | 52 |
| Weza | 76 | 51 |
| Glengarry | 2 | 2 |
| Umtata | 127 | 74 |
| Transkei Coast | 10 | 8 |
| Stutterheim | 61 | 74 |
| Fort Fordyce-Hogsback-Keiskammahoek incl. | | |
| King Williamstown | 293 | 346 |
| Limpopo | 44 | 14 |
| Total | 1163 | 1136 |

This year the parrots were again observed feeding at sites away from forests on the census day and during recent months, often in areas where they have not been seen previously or have been absent for many years. This suggests that there is little suitable natural fruit available in the indigenous forests.

Acknowledgements

Again I am most grateful to all those who participated in the CPBBD, particularly for the enthusiasm and continued support of the co-ordinators and volunteers, many of whom have participated for more than 10 years. I am also grateful to the contribution of the DWAF, Sappi and Mondi foresters, Indwe Security (especially Gary Harvey and Bertus Bouwer), and E. Cape Parks and KZN Wildlife officials. Special thanks to Mazda Wildlife for their continued support.

Contact Colleen Downs Email: downs@ukzn.ac.za

BIODIVERSITY ACT 10 (2004) & the Cape Parrot - Tee Taylor

NB This is one of the items that may be out of date now!

I have included the following details relating to the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (10 of 2004) in respect of its relevance to the Cape Parrot as there have recently been a few incidents & questions asked with regard what someone may do with or to Cape Parrots.

There are a number of pieces of legislation which have application to South Africa's wildlife including the Cape Parrot. These may be applicable at a provincial, national or international scale. The National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (Act 10 of 2004) provides the overarching national biodiversity legislation in respect of wildlife trade. With CITES providing the main piece of international legislation relating to international wildlife

trade. At the time of writing, legislation in respect of wildlife at the provincial and national scale is undergoing change, therefore it is recommended that up-to-date clarification from experts is sought if you need accurate information as I may have missed something here! In addition each province may have its own additional requirements.

So if someone says:

I want to shoot the @!\$*#ing parrots because they are eating my crop, I have a permit to keep Cape Parrots so it is OK for me to catch a wild one, or I took it in when it was injured so it is OK to keep it...

You can now redirect them to the Biodiversity Act!

In brief the purpose of the regulations are to:

- regulate the permit system applying to restricted activities of threatened or protected species;
- enable registration of captive facilities e.g. breeders, researchers, sanctuaries/ rehabilitators
- implement CITES regulations (international trade)

The Cape Parrot and 3 other bird species (Wattled Crane, Blue Swallow & Egyptian Vulture) receive the highest rating in the list of threatened and protected species (TOPS). They are classified under:

- SCHEDULE A: Threatened Species - Species threatened by one or more restricted activity (ies) as defined in NEMA: Biodiversity Act, 2004
- CATEGORY: Critically Endangered Species - Indigenous species facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild in the immediate future

The act lists the '**restricted activities**' relating to listed threatened or protected species that require permits from the relevant authority (NB: this is not the whole list of restrictions, I selected those more relevant):

- hunting, catching, capturing or killing any living TOPS specimen... by any means, method or device whatsoever, including searching, pursuing, driving, lying in wait, luring, alluring, discharging a missile or injuring with intent to hunt, catch, capture or kill any such specimen;
- gathering, collecting or plucking any specimen of a TOPS;
- importing into the Republic, any specimen of a TOPS;
- exporting from the Republic, including re-exporting from the Republic, any specimen of a TOPS;
- having in possession or exercising physical control over any specimen of a TOPS;
- growing, breeding or in any other way propagating any TOPS specimen, or causing it to multiply;
- conveying, moving or otherwise translocating any TOPS specimen
- selling or otherwise trading in, buying, receiving, giving, donating or accepting as a gift, or in any way acquiring or disposing of any specimen of a listed TOPS; or
- any other prescribed activity which involves a specimen of a TOPS

So the answer is that unless you just want to observe wild Cape Parrots going about their daily business without interfering with them in any way you probably need an appropriate permit and should get in contact with the permit offices with the local authorities. The permit will be granted for a specific activity e.g. a permit to trade in Cape Parrots would not permit the person to catch birds from the wild...

So whether you want to keep a Cape Parrot as a pet, or because you found an injured bird or breed them for conservation purposes the authorities must be notified and a permit obtained. Permits are also required to move captive Cape Parrots. If you want to sell or give your Cape Parrot (even pets) to someone else the authorities should be contacted so that this can be documented. If you unfortunately find them to be a pest for some reason, such as damaging crops etc, due to their protected status the authorities would need to be contacted to determine what action can be taken.

The permitting authorities deal with a wide range of species permits including Cape Parrots and I am sure will be happy to answer any queries.

People to contact if you have suspicions of illegal activities/trade (NB: these are not contacts for permits)

| | | | |
|---------------|---------------|--------------------|--|
| Eastern Cape: | Jaap Pienaar | Cell: | Email: Jaap.Pienaar@deaet.ecape.gov.za |
| KZN: | Rod Potter | Cell: 082 772 8343 | Email: rpotter@kznwildlife.com |
| Limpopo: | Kobus Pienaar | Cell: 082-8098875 | Email: pienaarAJ@ledet.gov.za |

No! To Mining in Bulwer - Ria Fokkens

NB Another item that may be out of date now - much has probably happened by now.

Ria Fokkens has sent details about a petition that is being developed against a proposed Dolomite Quarry at Bulwer. The Bulwer community is concerned about a project headed by EU funded company Gijima. This project is to assess the viability of a quarry just outside the town of Bulwer. As you know from previous newsletters there is a Cape Parrot population in Bulwer. The Bulwer community is also concerned that the quarry will affect the Parrots breeding etc.

Below are further details of the petition and anyone interested in further information or signing the petition can contact Ria at the details below.

NO! TO MINING IN BULWER

Midmar crushers funded by the EU Gijima project are making a feasibility study for a potential Dolomite quarry and cement block Manufacturing factory in Bulwer. The proposed site is only 2 Kilometres out of the town centre so that every effect of the mining operation will be keenly felt by all residents and tourists.

"The South African Constitution provides that everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being and to have the environment protected for the benefit of recent and future generations".

"This must be achieved through reasonable legislative and other measures that will prevent pollution and ecological degradation, promote conservation and secure sustainable use of natural resources while promoting economic and social development."

The proposed site is home to protected grassland and wildlife. It has also been used as the only safe Hang gliding landing field in the area by pilots from all over the world and from within South Africa for the past 30 years.

The mine will provide only 10 jobs.

We believe that the negative effect of this mine will cause serious loss of revenue to our existing businesses due to an inevitable loss of tourist trade in the town.

A mine in Bulwer means:

- Vastly increased heavy through traffic
- Noise pollution from Blasting
- Health risks from quarry dust
- A cement block factory polluting air and landscape
- A threat to our overstretched water table
- Destruction of protected grassland and rare flora & fauna
- **Threat to bird life in particular the endangered Cape Parrot**
- Threat to bushmen paintings on the mountain
- Loss of tourism revenue from pilots due to lack of safe landing field
- Loss of Tourism due to the destruction of the natural beauty of Bulwer
- Falling property prices

People interested in further information or signing the petition can contact Ria Fokkens

Contact Details: Email: ria@wildsky.co.za or Tel: 039 8320224 Cell: 082 748 8637.

Parrot Stew Recipe - Tee

Following my current literature search into parrots used as food and given the need to fill a small space in the newsletter... please forgive me!

Here is a joke parrot recipe which suggests some found the parrot meat a bit tough, it can be found with various alternatives.

Take 1 Galah, plucked and drawn, 1 onion, 1 stone, brick or axe head. Put the ingredients in a large pot and add enough water to cover well

and bring to the boil. Simmer very gently until the stone/brick/axe is soft and can be pierced by a fork. The Galah will be then ready to serve.

Another alternative to this recipes is to take one Galah and boil it with a boot - throw away the Galah and eat the boot.

Or to take a farriers rasp and file the Galah into a fine powder to make a soup.

It is quite interesting that while I am finding many comments where parrots were considered good food (similar to pigeon) it is always the Galah that is the brunt of these jokes.

As well as the joke recipes there is quite a history with regards to eating parrots around the world.

Let's not try any of these at home!

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

The Cape Parrot has featured on several **50/50 TV programmes** here are some of the links

2007: www.5050.co.za/inserts.asp?ID=8077

Feb 2002: www.5050.co.za/inserts.asp?ID=2415

2007: www.5050.co.za/inserts.asp?ID=7679

May 2002: www.5050.co.za/inserts.asp?ID=2542

2000: www.5050.co.za/inserts.asp?ID=4721

Nov 2002: www.5050.co.za/inserts.asp?ID=4594

BirdLife South Africa: www.birdlife.org.za/

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/

Contact Details:

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