

CONTENTS

VOLUME 35 (3) 2002

OSBORNE, T. O. Editorial	1
ROBSON, N. Red-billed Hornbill subspecies hybrid	2 - 3
BROWN, C. J. Point: Poisons and Scavengers - the right way forward	3 - 6
VERDOON, G & L. KOMEN. Counterpoint: From the Poison Working Group	7 - 11
SIMMONS, R. E. & P. LLOYD Sandgrouse: the biology behind conserving through sustainable use	12 - 24
OSBORNE, T.O. Bird Club Weekend Windpoort Farm	25
MACLEOD, N. MacLeod Safari bird observations	26 - 27
STEYN, N. Aris Camping Weekend	28
CUNNINGHAM, P. & W. ADANK. Notes on the breeding of the Redcrested Korhaan, <i>Eupodotis ruficrista</i>	28 - 30

Editorial

Timothy O. Osborne

We were supposed to be back on "schedule" with editions appearing every 3 months and I thought we were but a minor glitch occurred at the printers for volume 35(2). I had submitted the edition before returning to Alaska for a month and expected to find the volume in my mail box upon my return. It came as a surprise to me that no edition was ready. I inquired and found out that neither the Scientific Society nor Typoprint who prints the *Lanioturdus* had any idea where the manuscripts were. After several weeks of phoning and trying to trace the papers it turned out that a woman at Typoprint who had quit her job, had stuffed the manuscript into her desk drawer. It was finally located and printed in July instead of May!

I want to thank everyone who has been submitting papers for publishing, as we are now back to having a Club journal with recent information. This edition contains a variety of papers starting with two opposing viewpoints, but both working towards the same end result—reducing the number of birds poisoned in Namibia. Rob Simmons and Penn Lloyd give us the biology behind the hunting seasons and other authors see one small event but it all contributes towards scientific knowledge.

I am convinced that the only long-term solution to this very significant environmental issue is to ban the use of poisons for predator control. I think that the time is now right to strongly move this approach forward, as the range of alternatives are all “feel-good” activities that will not solve the problem.

In saying this, I do not wish in any way to undermine the important work carried out by many people to raise awareness around the problem and to try and do something to ease the situation. Given the fact that the use of poisons is currently legal, people are doing their best within the existing system to reduce the problem. I would especially like to congratulate Liz Komen, Peter Bridgeford and others in the Poison Working Group and Vulture Study Group for their hard work and dedication. However, my call is that we put all our efforts into getting out of the current system into one where poison use is no longer legal tenure for predator control in rangeland farming.

Until this new stage is reached, one “feel-good” activity that might be a bit more effective than others is to invite farmers and land-owners to become members of a “POISON FREE” coalition. Each farmer and land-owner joining gets a certificate. A map is then updated and made public of all farmers who are members, as well as those who are not. Our friends in the media - both press and TV - could help publicise the initiative, and give updates of farmers joining, and print maps as they fill with new members.

Counterpoint from the Poison Working Group

Prof. Gerhard Verdoorn¹ and Liz Komen²

¹Poison Working Group
Endangered Wildlife Trust, PO Box 72334, Parkview 2122
South Africa, pwg@ewt.org.za

²NARREC
PO Box 11232, Windhoek, Namibia, liz@narrec.schoolnet.na

The Poison Working Group (PWG) of the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) has a different approach to poison use for predator control and their approach to the problem follows:

The PWG follows a pragmatic approach to poisons as the “total ban” approach failed completely and resulted in severe antagonism from the agrochemical industry as they feel threatened by it. If one needs support for the anti-poisoning campaign in Namibia, one needs to be realistic and not idealistic. The PWG does not promote the use of poisons but concentrates our education and training on the responsible use of it. It is mainly the MISUSE of poisons that causes the problems surrounding poisons and that should be addressed fiercely, but open-mindedly.

The PWG believes in an interactive problem solving process and has through this approach gained the trust and respect of the agrochemical industry, various state departments and the agricultural sector. The group supports the responsible and selective use of agrochemicals in a sustainable manner that has a minimum impact on wildlife. It does not however tolerate blatant misuse, unethical use or any practices that may have a detrimental impact on wildlife. People are an integral part of the PWG’s focus and the larger proportion of its activities directly involves working and communication with a broad spectrum of the southern African community.

The PWG in South Africa currently has the compound 1080 under trials for selective predator control. An extract from the 1080 document on its conclusion is given below:

There are a few indisputable facts related to the problem animal frenzy:

1. Predation will always occur as long as people farm domestic stock or wildlife. Human beings can never break the cycle of life and one aspect of this cycle is predation and killing of one or the other to provide nourishment for the predator.
2. Persecution of predators will always be part of agriculture and human nature. People retain their perceived 'right' to persecute predators rightfully or wrongfully. The persecution is very often malicious, cruel and non-selective. It is also a sporting activity for certain people that do not contribute one iota to solving the predator-farmer conflict.
3. Poisons will always be used for the killing of predators. It will never stop until ALL chemicals are removed from the world - that is an inconceivable ideal.
4. The PWG agrees that there are many ways of solving the predator-farmer conflict but it is important to address the issues that have the greatest impact on wildlife. By not offering farmers a cheap, effective and low impact chemical control method for the main predators, the working group will simply be part of those people that criticize farmers, poisons and wildlife killing without offering a real tangible solution.
5. The PWG stresses the fact that other methods of killing problem animals such as trapping, shooting and hunting with dogs are most often very cruel, non-selective and ineffective.
6. The PWG offers farmers training courses based on the following principles:
 - a. Basic principles of ecological livestock management.
 - b. Alternative livestock management techniques that may be employed to minimise predation.
 - c. Protective measures for livestock to prevent predation.
 - d. Predator removal techniques that include all methods discussed in this document.
 - e. Poisons are the very last resort to manage predators.
 - f. Protection of non-target species through sound and ethical problem animal management principles.
 - g. Restoration of small mammal and bird populations to act as a buffer against those carnivores that are implicated in livestock predation.

7. For many individuals who sell their services as 'problem animal hunters' the financial gains from their activities far exceed the contribution to sound environmental and agricultural management. Such people are fervently opposed to the private use of poisons for problem animal control as it competes with their own financial activities. The author believes that such people often cause far more damage to the environment by whatever means of control they employ than the individual farmer who uses a legal poisoning method ethically.
8. Poisons per se are not bad, dangerous or lethal - it is once the human element is linked to poisons that these products become highly controversial, dangerous and unethical. The very same statement is true for the gin trap, the cage trap, the rifle, the hunting dog and many other methods of trapping and killing wild animals.

The PWG has already made a significant impact on the ethics of poison use in South Africa and will continue on its path of developing ethically and environmentally sound techniques to resolve conflict between wildlife and farming. Problem animal management is only one of many topics that the group is currently addressing through its network of field officers, state departments, supporters and specialists both locally and abroad.

The PWG maintains its position as a pragmatic and responsible conservation organisation working towards solving the problems of wildlife poisoning. Problem animals are the single largest reason for the poisoning of innocent predators and raptors and that problem requires urgent attention. There is no difference between the management of insect pests and problem animals. The PWG advocates an integrated pest management system for problem animals in which the use of poison may play a very small role, if at all. Poison should be the last resort and if used, we believe that Compound 1080 applied to the letter of the protocols designed by the group, will pose very little threat to wildlife. During training courses on problem animals the group teaches farmers all about management of livestock, preventative measures, all elimination techniques and lastly the single lethal dose poison bait principle. It is just a small part of a much bigger picture.

Ecologically sound management of the farming environment is not an option - it is a moral obligation of all mankind

The mission statement of the PWG:

The Poison Working Group aims to address the poisoning of wildlife through data assimilation, dissemination, analysis and investigation on a scientific and interactive basis, and to take appropriate pro-active education and conservation action for the protection of wildlife and people in southern Africa.

Some history and developments of the Poison Working Group.

The Poison Working Group (PWG) was founded in 1992 as a working group of the Endangered Wildlife Trust to specifically address the large scale poisoning of birds of prey, cranes, storks, game birds and waterfowl.

PWG has helped to:

Develop new laws and policies on *Quelea* control, locust control and blackfly control. Replace highly toxic products with more environmentally compatible products with a 95% reduction in non-target species, particularly birds of prey.

Develop new methodology for the selective control of predators, which is now widely used in agricultural areas.

Create an awareness campaign on owls and rodenticides, with promotion of a "low-risk of secondary poisoning" product for the general public.

Assist with the retrieval of over 1,050 tons of obsolete pesticides for incineration (including retrievals in Namibia).

Train 20 000 commercial farmers and 40 000 small scale farmers over 7 years, with 500 trainers developed.

Implement the phasing out of monocrotophos from the South African market.

Initiate an anti-poison campaign in Europe through a three day conference held in Mallorca, Spain.

Draft a management plan for rodent control in Australia which resulted in the implementation of owl-compatible rodenticides in Australian state forests.

In 1998 and 1999 two PWG officers received "Top Ten Awards" from the Endangered Wildlife Trust for alleviation of environmental risks concerning poison and pesticide use.

The PWG convinced the Department of Health in South Africa to reduce DDT to a selective, stricter use in some areas (mainly Northern KZN in SA).

The PWG has maintained a very high public profile through various media channels.

The PWG is used nationally in SA as well as regionally in SADC as an agrochemical information and problem solving group.

The PWG is formally acknowledged by the World Working Group on Birds of Prey and Owls.

The PWG is formally recognized by the agrochemical industry in South Africa (SA) as a watchdog for agrochemical safety.

The PWG is formally recognized by The Department of Health in SA as well as by the World Health Organization (WHO) as the national data base for wildlife.

In Namibia the PWG has over the past years presented a number of courses for farmers as well as provided information in the media.

The PWG is currently supporting poison awareness initiatives in Namibia.