FOOD OF KELP GULLS *LARUS DOMINICANUS* AT SQUARE POINT, SOUTH WEST AFRICA

There is a small breeding colony of Kelp Gulls *Larus dominicanus* at Square Point (27 45S, 15 20E) on the coast of South West Africa/Namibia (Shaughnessy & Shaughnessy 1976). During visits to the colony on 30 January 1978, 25 July 1978 and 29 January 1980, food items were picked up from the ground. They are described here to supplement knowledge of the food habits of this gull reviewed by Brooke & Cooper (1979).

On the first visit the following fish remains were collected : vertebrae of a Snoek *Thyrsites atun*; skull and skin of a Galjoen *Coracinus capensis*; skull of a juvenile Kingklip *Xiphiurus capensis*. In addition, pieces of the exoskeleton of Crayfish *Jasus lalandii* and bones, skin and black fur of Cape Fur Seal pups *Arctocephalus pusillus* were found.

On the second visit more fish remains were found as well as beaks of cephalopods. The latter were from octopus (four beaks) and from ommastrephid squid (6).

On the third visit shells of the bivalve mollusc *Donax* sp., cuttlebones of cuttlefish (family Sepiolidae), exoskeletons of Crayfish and bones of Cape Fur Seals were found. The carapace length of the exoskeletons of 16 Crayfish averaged 56,5 mm (standard deviation 5,1; range 49 to 70). The exoskeletons had not been moulted since the carapaces were not split along the ecdysial suture.

The bones, skin and fur of Cape Fur Seals presumably originated in the nearby (200 m distant) colony at Van Reenen Bay where dead pups are frequent in January. Cape Fur Seals occasionally regurgitate food remains in the colony which are then scavenged by Kelp Gulls or Blackbacked Jackals *Canis mesomelas*. Since Cape Fur Seals feed on Crayfish, octopus, squid, cuttlefish, Snoek and Galjoen (Rand 1959), as well as Kingklip (unpubl.obs.), the food remains found in the gull colony may well have originated from the seals. Alternatively, these animals may have been washed up dead on the beach and scavenged, or caught live by the gulls. The last possibility is suggested because Kelp Gulls are known to catch live Crayfish (Berruti *et al.* 1979). Another possible source of the fish is the nets of trawlers, where Kelp Gulls have been seen foraging (Sinclair 1978).

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