

RESULTS OF BEACH PATROLS CONDUCTED IN SOUTHERN AFRICA IN 1980

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ABSTRACT

During 1980 regular beach patrols by the African Seabird Group extended to nine areas of the Cape Province and Natal, South Africa. A total of 1 095 seabirds of 38 species was found over a total distance of 9 853 km, an average of 0,11 birds per km. The most abundant species was the Cape Cormorant *Phalacrocorax capensis* (424 specimens, 38,7 %). Records of Greyheaded Albatross *Diomedea chrysostoma*, Kerguelen Petrel *Pterodroma brevirostris* and Leach's Stormpetrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* were made. A wreck of Arctic Terns *Sterna paradisaea* was recorded. Data for recoveries of ringed birds are included. Forty-five non-seabirds were found.

INTRODUCTION

This is the fourth annual report on beach patrols conducted by the African Seabird Group (Cooper 1978, Avery 1979, 1980) since 1977. Since the end of 1981 will form a convenient five-year block for a number of the major surveys, a summary and discussion of data from this period will appear in *Cormorant* 10 in 1982.

RESULTS

During 1980 monthly beach surveys took place at eight localities in the Cape Province and three in Natal (not separated in the report) (Table 1 & Fig. 1). A new survey to be conducted over two years was initiated by myself at Elands Bay and since S.T. Baron has managed to gain consistent access to Die Plaat this is now included. Both the Fish Hoek and Cape Recife surveys lapsed during 1980 although these have since been resumed during 1981 by T. Oatley, and J. Spearpoint and B. Every respectively. Data received for 1980 for these localities are included under the heading "various" in Table 2. The survey of Natal beaches by Natal Parks Board staff continues and is conducted both over a great distance of coastline and more frequently relative to the other surveys. It is of interest to note that increased frequency of patrols has not affected the low frequency of birds on either the Natal or Rockcliff sections although this does affect the density. A total of 1 095 seabirds of 38 species was found over a total distance of 9 853 km. This represents a density of 0,11 seabirds/km; the lowest recorded yet. This figure is more consistent with that of 1979 (0,39) than previous years (1,1 and 1,1) (Cooper 1978, Avery 1979, 1980) and clearly indicates the influence of the Natal surveys. A total of 780 km

TABLE 1

BEACH PATROLS FOR DEAD SEABIRDS 1980 : AREAS COVERED

| Area | Length (km) | Distance covered (km) | No. seabirds | No./km | Transport | Organizer |
|--------------|-------------|-----------------------|--------------|--------|--------------|-------------|
| Elands Bay | 14 | 168 | 190 | 1,13 | Foot/vehicle | G. Avery |
| Yzerfontein | 15 | 180 | 285 | 1,58 | Vehicle | G. Avery |
| Koeberg | 7 | 84 | 47 | 0,56 | Foot | G. Avery |
| Fish Hoek* | (0,8) | (8) | - | - | Foot | P. Ryan |
| False Bay | 20 | 240 | 402 | 1,68 | Foot | G. Avery |
| Hawston | 5 | 60 | 26 | 0,43 | Foot | S.T. Baron |
| Die Plaat | 5 | 60 | 17 | 0,28 | Foot | S.T. Baron |
| Cape Recife* | (5) | (15) | - | - | Foot | |
| Rockcliff** | 4 | 52 | 2 | 0,04 | Foot | C.J. Vernon |
| Natal*** | 143 | 8 221 | 38 | 0,005 | Foot/vehicle | T. Oatley |
| Various | - | 780 | 88 | 0,11 | Foot/vehicle | |
| Total | | 9 853 | 1 095 | 0,11 | | |

* incomplete, included in "various"

** sometimes twice monthly

*** several times per month

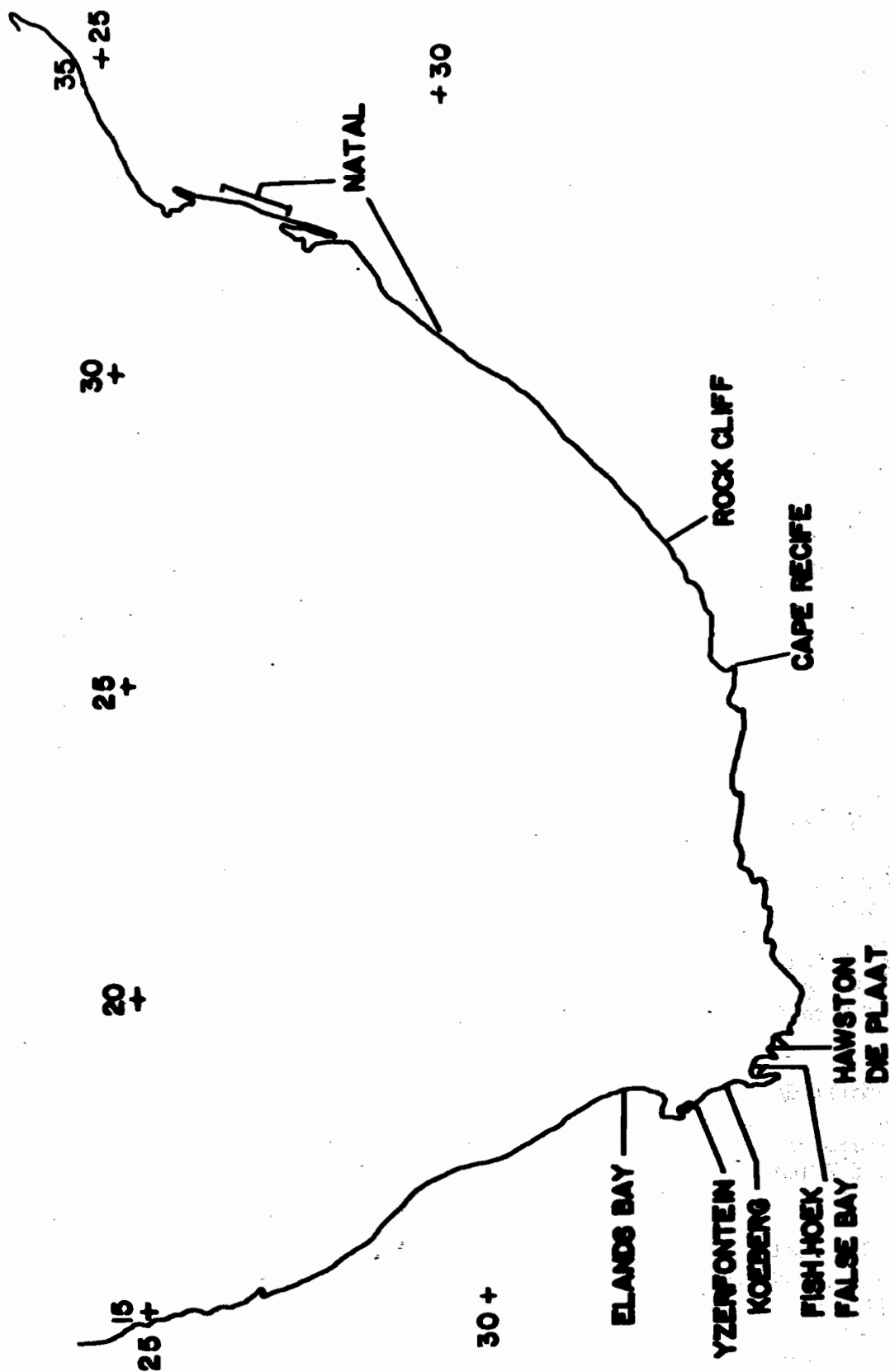


Figure 1
Localities of regular monthly patrols in southern Africa
in 1980

TABLE 2

BEACH PATROLS FOR DEAD SEABIRDS, 1980 : SPECIES COMPOSITION

| Species | Number | | | | | | | | | TOTAL |
|---|------------|-------------|--------|-----------|---------|-----------|-----------|-------|---------|-------|
| | Elands Bay | Yzerfontein | Koebeg | False Bay | Hawston | Die Plaat | Rockcliff | Natal | Various | |
| Jackass Penguin <i>Spheniscus demersus</i> | 28 | 57 | 6 | 32 | 10 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 10 | 150 |
| Wandering Albatross <i>Diomedea exulans</i> | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Blackbrowed Albatross <i>D. melanophris</i> | 0 | 6 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 9 |
| Greyheaded Albatross <i>D. chrysostoma</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Yellownosed Albatross <i>D. chlororhynchos</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Shy Albatross <i>D. cauta</i> | 0 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Albatross indet. | 0 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 7 |
| Giant petrels <i>Macronektes spp.</i> | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Pintado Petrel <i>Daption capense</i> | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Greatwinged Petrel <i>Pterodroma macroptera</i> | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Softplumaged Petrel <i>P. mollis</i> | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| Kerguelen Petrel <i>P. brevirostris</i> | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Blue Petrel <i>Halobaena caerulea</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Broadbilled Prion <i>Pachyptila forsteri</i> | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Dove Prion <i>P. desolata</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 7 |
| Lesser Broadbilled/ Dove Prion <i>P. salvini/desolata</i> | 0 | 3 | 0 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 14 |
| Slenderbilled Prion <i>P. belcheri</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Prion indet. | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 5 |
| Whitechinned Petrel <i>Procellaria aequinoctialis</i> | 2 | 1 | 0 | 24 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 33 |
| Petrel indet. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Cory's Shearwater <i>Calonectris diomedea</i> | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Sooty Shearwater <i>P. griseus</i> | 4 | 9 | 2 | 73 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 12 | 109 |
| Storm Petrel <i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |

Table 2 (continued)

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|--------------|--|
| Leach's Stormpetrel | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Oceanodroma leucorhoa</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | |
| Wilson's Stormpetrel | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Oceanites oceanicus</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | |
| Cape Gannet | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Morus capensis</i> | 9 | 12 | 6 | 42 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 12 | 9 | 98 | |
| Whitebreasted Cormorant | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> | 2 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 13 | |
| Cape Cormorant | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>P. capensis</i> | 80 | 134 | 23 | 149 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 35 | 424 | |
| Bank Cormorant | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>P. neglectus</i> | 2 | 5 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | |
| Crowned Cormorant | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>P. coronatus</i> | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | |
| Cormorant indet. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | |
| Antarctic Skua | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Catharacta antarctica</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | |
| Kelp Gull | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Larus dominicanus</i> | 24 | 20 | 4 | 23 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 73 | |
| Greyheaded Gull | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>L. cirrocephalus</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | |
| Hartlaub's Gull | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>L. hartlaubii</i> | 7 | 7 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 | |
| Sabine's Gull | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>L. sabini</i> | 0 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | |
| Common Tern | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Sterna hirundo</i> | 9 | 8 | 0 | 8 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 30 | |
| "Comic" Tern | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>S. hirundo/paradisaea</i> | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | |
| Antarctic Tern | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>S. vittata</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | |
| Arctic Tern | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>S. paradisaea</i> | 16 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 21 | |
| Sooty Tern | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>S. fuscata</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ?1 | ?1 | |
| Little Tern | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>S. albifrons</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | |
| Sandwich Tern | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>S. sandvicensis</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | |
| Swift Tern | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>S. bergii</i> | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 7 | |
| Tern indet. | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | |
| Unidentifiable | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | |
| Totals | 190 | 285 | 47 | 402 | 26 | 17 | 2 | 38 | 88 | 1 095 | |

was covered on non-regular patrols in the southwestern, eastern Cape and Natal. This increase is, however, due to a Wader Study Group survey rather than increased activity of members. The most abundant seabird found was the Cape Cormorant *Phalacrocorax capensis* (424 specimens, 39 %), followed by the Jackass Penguin *Spheniscus demersus* (150 specimens, 14 %), Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus* (109 specimens, 10 %), Cape Gannet *Morus capensis* (98 specimens, 9 %), Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus* (73 specimens, 7 %) and Whitechinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis* (33 specimens, 3 %). As was found previously, much the same species were commonest although proportions vary. Only six species made up 81 % of the total specimens of 38 confirmed species. One Greyheaded Albatross *Diomedea chrysostoma*, three Kerguelen Petrels *Pterodroma brevirostris* and one Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* were recovered. The isolated occurrence of Procellariidae - two additional specimens of *P. brevirostris* were recorded elsewhere (Brooke & Avery 1981) - adds further support to evidence which suggests that wrecks of the rarer Procellariidae are intermittent (Cooper 1979, Brooke & Avery 1981).

Sooty Shearwaters continue to be wrecked in False Bay during the summer and it would appear that unlike other Procellariidae, this species is regularly 'wrecked' here. It is recorded as the commonest of the Procellariidae (Brooke & Sinclair 1978, McLachlan & Liversidge 1978) and it is possible that this, together with the physical conformation of the Bay acting as a trap, causes birds to be pressed ashore by the prevailing summer southeaster causing them to fly more directly into the wind to return to the open sea. This may be repeated and as a result birds become exhausted and die in numbers (Cox 1976). The depredations of fishermen as evidenced by the occurrence of wings snapped across the shaft of the humerus also contribute (Cooper 1977). A wreck of Arctic Terns *Sterna paradisaea* occurred at Elands Bay and might also be evidenced in False Bay by the higher than normal number. Mortality of Common Terns *S. hirundo* was not as high as previously. The 1979 prion *Pachyptila* sp. wreck (Avery 1979) was not repeated as intensively although a number of birds was recovered.

A total of eight ringed birds was recovered, the most notable being the twice-ringed Wandering Albatross from Yzerfontein (Table 3).

A total of 45 non-seabirds was found, 12 of which were shorebirds (Table 4). Members of the Columbidae were again the most abundant (38 %).

DISCUSSION

Apart from the influence of the increased distance covered in Natal, results appear to remain relatively consistent with a low density of seabirds in most localities from year to year. It is becoming apparent that densities are lowest on the east coast as evidenced by the Natal data. It should be noted that the densities given reflect mortality over a 12 month period and do not, therefore, illustrate seasonal variation. Densities are markedly higher during summer in the southwestern region whereas,

TABLE 3

RECOVERY OF RINGED BIRDS : 1980

| Species | Number | Ringling date | Recovery site | Date |
|---|--|---|--------------------|--------------|
| Wandering Albatross <i>Diomedea exulans</i> (same specimen) | OLS Mus, Paris BS4187; CSIRO, Austral.140-33145 | Crozet Islands 10 Jan 1971 Wallongong, NSW, Austr. 16 Aug 1975 | Yzerfontein | 23 Feb 1980 |
| Storm Petrel <i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i> | 21-86501 | Auskerry, Ork. 17 Jul 1977 | Umgeni R. Mouth | 16 Aug 1980 |
| Cape Gannet <i>Morus capensis</i> | 9-21344 | Malgas Island 15 Feb 1980 | Yzerfontein | 22 Mar 1980 |
| Bank Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax neglectus</i> | 9-17180 | Dassen Island 22 Oct 1978 | Yzerfontein | 22 Nov 1980 |
| Swift Tern <i>Sterna bergii</i> | 5-70379 | Jutten Island 19 Apr 1980 | Durban | 28 Sept 1980 |
| | 5-70500 | " | Elands Bay | 17 Aug 1980 |
| | 5-70555 | " | Koeberg | 20 Sept 1980 |
| | Yellow colour ring only | " | Yzerfontein | 19 Jul 1980 |

TABLE 4

NON-SEABIRDS FOUND DURING BEACH PATROLS : 1980

| Species | Number |
|---|---------------|
| Ostrich <i>Struthio camelus</i> | 2 (one chick) |
| Blacknecked Grebe <i>Podiceps nigricollis</i> | 1 |
| Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i> | 1 |
| Great White Pelican <i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i> | 1 |
| Blackcrowned Night Heron <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i> | 1 |
| Sacred Ibis <i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i> | 2 |
| Glossy Ibis <i>Plegadis falcinellus</i> | 1 |
| Domestic Fowl <i>Gallus</i> sp. | 1 |
| African Finfoot <i>Podica senegalensis</i> | 1 |
| African Black Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus moquini</i> | 3 |
| Whitefronted Sandplover <i>Charadrius marginatus</i> | 2 |
| Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i> | 2 |
| Curlew Sandpiper <i>Calidris ferruginea</i> | 1 |
| Sanderling <i>C. alba</i> | 1 |
| Rock Pigeon <i>Columba guinea</i> | 8 |
| Feral Domestic Pigeon <i>C. livia</i> | 7 |
| Cape Turtle Dove <i>Streptopelia capicola</i> | 1 |
| Laughing Dove <i>S. senegalensis</i> | 1 |
| African Black Swift <i>Apus barbatus</i> | 3 |
| Alpine Swift <i>A. melba</i> | 1 |
| European Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i> | 1 |
| Cape Sugarbird <i>Promerops cafer</i> | 1 |
| Cape Sparrow <i>Passer melanurus</i> | 1 |
| Cape Canary <i>Serinus canicollis</i> | 1 |
| Total | 45 |

in spite of generally low densities, the Natal coast tends to produce more birds during winter. Species composition remains relatively consistent for the more common birds although actual proportions vary in some cases. Increasing evidence for the intermittent occurrence of rarer seabirds and the number of recoveries of ringed birds signifies the value of systematic beach surveys over a number of years.

The increased distance covered by the African Seabird Group is most gratifying although it is obvious that this largely reflects the activities of the Natal Parks Board staff and a few others. There is a need for more surveys on other stretches of coastline either at a distance or near existing areas and we would welcome any volunteers. I should be happy to advise and provide survey forms.

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Northern Giant Petrel.