



MINUTES OF THE BIRDLIFE OVERBERG ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2024

DATE: 10 June 2024

VENUE: Community Hall at Mollergren Park, Hermanus

CHAIRPERSON OF MEETING: Anton Odendal

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The members were welcomed and the apologies and proxies received were noted:

MEMBERS PRESENT AT THE AGM: 1. Gary Baumgarten/ 2. Ally Ditchfield/ 3. Kobus du Pisani/ 4. Laura du Toit/ 5. Pierre du Toit/ 6. Irma Esbach/ 7. Helen Geldart/ 8. Iain Geldart/ 9. Tierck Hoekstra/ 10. Coerie Badenhorst/ 11. Anne-Marie Jonker/ 12. Thinus Jonker/ 13. Richard Ketteringham/ 14. Tobie Louw/ 15. Carin Malan/ 16. Anton Odendal/ 17. Elaine Odendal/ 18. Johan Olivier/ 19. Steve Peck/ 20. Petro Schlemmer/ 21. Carl Swart/ 22. Brian Taylor/ 23. Carol van Hoogstraten/ 24. Johan van der Westhuizen/ 25. Ruth Vary/ 26. Jenny Westwater/

WRITTEN PROXIES RECEIVED: 1. Steve Bailey/ 2. Keith Baughan/ 3. MC Botha/ 4. Cathy Bruce/ 5. Robin Crewe/ 6. Carolyn Harris/ 7. Louise Makepeace/ 8. Dawid Malan/ 9. Ann Mapham/ 10. Peta McAdam/ 11. Hele Oosthuizen/ 12. Johanna Peyper/ 13. Marthinus Potgieter/ 14. Nida Potgieter/ 15. Gerhard Swiegers/ 16. Karine Swiegers/ 17. Reinhard van der Merwe/ 18. Denise van der Westhuizen/ 19. Gerrie van der Westhuizen/ 20. Marie Vorster/ 21. Reine Dalton/ 22. Elsabe Ketteringham/ 23. Graeme Hatley/ 24. Louis Alberts/ 25. Barbara Baughan/ 26. Jeanetta Hoekstra/

APOLOGIES RECEIVED: 1. Steve Bailey (Proxy)/ 2. Barbara Baughan/ 3. Keith Baughan (Proxy)/ 4. Cathy Bruce (Proxy)/ 5. Robin Crewe (Proxy)/ 6. Carolyn Harris (Proxy)/ 7. Graeme Hatley (Proxy)/ 8. Marcus Lane-Jones/ 9. Vivie Lombard/ 10. Peta McAdam (Proxy)/ 11. Marianne Palmer/ 12. Jill Wheeler/ 13. Dawid Malan (Proxy)/ 14. Ann Mapham (Proxy)/ 15. Ann Martin/ 16. Nick Martin/ 17. Peta McAdam/ 18. Helé Oosthuizen (Proxy)/ 19. Johanna Peyper (Proxy)/ 20. Nida Potgieter (Proxy)/ 21. Marthinus Potgieter (Proxy)/ 22. Louise Makepeace (Proxy). 23. Rynhard van der Merwe (Proxy)/ 24. Reine Dalton (Proxy)/ 25. Paula Combrink/ 26. Kobus van der Merwe/ 27. Elsabe Ketteringham (Proxy). 28. Louis Alberts/ 29. Jeanatta Hoekstra (Proxy)

2. INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS We experienced the unfortunate withdrawal of critical committee members over the last year and Anton started with a number of 'emergency measures' – this developed into something of a fulltime job. We are however happy that it was managed to keep the club going and membership relatively stable. We expressed our sincere appreciation to **Elaine, Paula Combrink, Carin Malan, Steve Peck, Graeme Hatley, Johan van der Westhuizen** and others too many to mention who had given us support and guidance in recent years. We will welcome the incoming committee at this AGM.

3. INFRASTRUCTURE

3.1 MONTHLY TALKS AND LECTURES: The format of the monthly talks was discussed briefly and it was decided to continue with the current format: Participants bring their own snacks and drinks and make cash contributions to cover our costs for the rental of the hall and guest speakers. We will remain at Mollergren Park for these events despite an increase in the rental costs. The format of the year-end function as a 'bring and braai' with members illustrating their favourite photographs taken during the year also worked well and will be continued. Richard Masson will be our speaker on 8 July when he will show his audiovisual presentation on birding in Namibia.

We thank the management committee at Mollergren Park for allowing us to use the venue and express our sincere appreciation to Frank Matthee for his help and support each month.

3.2 DAY OUTINGS AND COURSES

DAY OUTINGS: We expressed our sincere appreciation and thanks to **Johan van der Westhuizen** for taking over the responsibility of organising day outings. This has created new energy and enthusiasm as illustrated by the increase in the number of new members and guests participating in these exciting events. Morning outings were undertaken to well-known top regional birding destinations such as Jessie Walton's farm, Rooiels & Harold Porter Botanical Gardens, the Greyton, Napier, Elim and Stanford districts and the Karwyderskraal & Swartrivier roads. Even more exciting, new destinations such as Paul Cluver's farm and two guided tours to the Nuwejaars Special Management Area were undertaken. The latter were particularly popular and will be repeated in 2025 with at least one such an event already being booked by **Steve Peck**. Members are encouraged to participate in these events as these are the lifeline of most bird clubs.

Participation in BLSA's Birding Big Days was adapted in order to encourage more birders in the Overberg region to participate. The current format worked very well over the last three years and it was recommended that this be continued in future.

INDEMNITY FORMS

The recent tragic event during a Hermanus Bird Club outing again highlighted the importance of the completion of indemnity forms by members participating in club events, activities and outings. It was decided that no member or guest will be allowed on an outing without having the appropriate indemnity form in place.

WEEKDAY MORNING HIKES: We have undertaken a few of these walks in the past to venues such as the Onrus coastline, Fernkloof Nature Reserve and the van Hoogstraten's farm in the Hemel-en-Aarde valley. Several novice birders joined us illustrating the huge interest in birds and birding out there. Some of these participants joined the club and this is possibly a great way of increasing our membership. The continuation of these walks should be considered by the incoming committee, but for this to happen we will need members to volunteer to lead and guide these hikes. Note that several other clubs are undertaking such events on a monthly basis, the popular monthly hikes in Kirstenbosch by members of the Cape Bird Club possibly being the best example. Carin Malan stated that proper records of

birds recorded during such hikes should be kept. **To be considered by the incoming committee.**

WEEKEND OUTINGS AND TOURS: These outings had nearly fallen by the wayside since the start of the pandemic. Since then small groups, often privately organised, visited destinations such as Barry House on Riverton Stud and the Klaasvoogds region in the Robertson district, Kostaplenti at Nature's Valley and Algeria in the Cederberg Wilderness. Some members also participated in the SANParks Honorary Rangers Birding Weekends presented at several National Parks. Many members have requested that we start with such events again and this possibility should be investigated. For this to happen we will need a volunteer to take over this function or individual members will have to be approached to set up and lead specific weekend outings and tours in future – we are going to need all the support we can get in this regard. **To be considered by the incoming committee.**

MONTHLY LISTS OF BIRDS RECORDED IN THE OVERBERG REGION: Many club members and other collaborators have been contributing to these lists. We have now reached the 50th continuous month of publishing these on both the website and the Facebook page where they remain both popular and well viewed. Many people not part of the club have now started participating leading to us forming new friendships and even signing up new members.

We are now at 390 species having been recorded in the Overberg region since the start of the pandemic in April 2020 and many species not previously recorded in the region have now been added to our overall list. This is a very encouraging development illustrating the vast birding potential of the region.

The monthly lists will continue to be an ongoing process and all members are requested to forward reports of birds seen in the area to Anton at WhatsApp 082 550 3347.

We now have a data set of more than three years allowing us to start drafting comparative overviews and reports – these make for fascinating reading, as well as being a wonderful marketing tool for the region.

Several members participating in the monthly counts have started using the BirdLasser app for the reporting of species being recorded. This is a very user-friendly application and adds value to one's birding experiences. **Graeme Hatley** has presented a workshop on the use of the BirdLasser app, how to get involved in the bird atlas project SABAP2 and how to participate in BLO's Overberg Challenge project for members. He has produced a wonderful tutorial that can be viewed online at this link:

<https://birdlifeoverberg.org.za/2023/05/birdlasser-tutorial/>

All members are encouraged to join in the fun as this will improve the quality of your birding experiences, as well as contributing to our growing data sets on birds and birding in the Overberg region.

ONLINE COURSES AND TALKS: Three live courses were presented over the last year and many individual talks were forwarded via WeTransfer to participants who could not participate in the courses. It was recommended that the presentation of such courses as membership drives for the club should be considered, but for this to be effective we will need members to get friends and colleagues to participate. **To be considered by the incoming committee.**

4. CONSERVATION

APPEALS AGAINST DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

These efforts are extremely time-consuming and costly and Anton has decided not to continue with it on behalf of the club or the Western Cape Birding Forum. It was recommended that we support environmental agencies such as CapeNature, home-owners associations and the Overberg Conservation Trust when they lodge such appeals. Individual members will be most welcome to register as Interested and Affected Parties when such proposals are put forward, but they will do so in their own capacity.

BIRDLIFE OVERBERG'S CLEANMARINE PROJECT ON THE CONSERVATION OF OUR COASTLINE AND ESTUARIES.

COASTAL CLEAN-UPS

These regular clean-ups were terminated during the pandemic. However, several local groups such as the 'Onrus Litter Ladies' and the Westcliff Ratepayers are continuing with such clean-ups on a regular basis. Members are encouraged to convince people in their local areas to organise such ongoing clean-ups particularly at so-called 'hotspots' where plastics and other debris wash out significantly.

FISHING LINE BINS

We have received requests from volunteers for more bins to be set up at key spots that had been identified along our coastline. This will depend on whether SA Plastics will again start producing these bins.

THE PROTECTION OF NESTS OF BEACH BREEDING BIRDS ALONG OUR COASTLINE

This project has continued with many groups of volunteers in local areas still being motivated to continue. Many nest warning signs were unfortunately lost or destroyed during the Cape Storm last year. The last signs that we still had available were donated to the volunteer group at Betty's Bay. The project has been hugely successful in that many African Oystercatchers and White-fronted Plovers were assisted to raise their chicks successfully. Many valuable lessons are also being learnt by volunteers adding to our conservation efforts in this regard. It is recommended that this project be continued and that a new set of warning signs be produced and disseminated to volunteers. A request was tabled at the AGM for the allocation of R 11,000.00 for the production of more of these nest warning signs. This was debated at some length and a decision was taken to only revisit this matter closer to the breeding season that commences in August.

CO-ORDINATED WATERBIRD COUNTS (CWACs)

Over the last three years these counts were extended to now include all the estuaries along the Cape Whale Coast and this bodes well for the future conservation of birds associated with water. Carin Malan had also facilitated a process whereby Richard Masson and volunteers from the Stanford Bird Club have recently started doing CWACs at the De Hoop Nature Reserve adding to the growing importance of this collaborative project.

Dr Giselle Murison was our guest speaker in May when she highlighted progress with the CWACs in general and the counts along the Botvlei in particular.

We expressed our sincere appreciation to Carin Malan for the co-ordination of these counts. We also congratulated Carin for the recognition she had received from BirdLife South Africa's by awarding her with the prestigious OWL AWARD 2023. Very well done Carin – much deserved!

THE KOGELBERG WILDLIFE REHABILITATION CENTRE

Carin Malan submitted a request for the sponsorship of the development of a free-flying aviary at this facility earlier in the year. This request was included in the annual report and Carin Malan discussed this matter briefly during the meeting. A decision of contributing R 20,000.00 towards this project was taken at the AGM on the condition that Carin negotiates a counter performance with representatives of the Kogelberg Biosphere. This process is ongoing.

5. COMMUNICATION:

We thanked **Steve Peck** for producing an excellent new club newsletter that will in future be disseminated on a quarterly, rather than a bi-monthly basis. We are receiving many very positive feedbacks on this.

OurBirdLife Overberg **FACEBOOK ACCOUNT** is hugely successful and continues to improve visits to our region. Several members are also posting excellent photographs not to be missed on a regular basis. Members not yet part of this are encouraged to join as this is an effective and rapid way of communicating on events, sightings and the like.

BLO SIGHTING WHATSAPP GROUP: We would like to express our sincere appreciation to **Paula Combrink** for still managing the “BLO Sighting” WhatsApp reporting service. This often creates “pop-up outings” where members set up outings on short notice. All members are invited to contact Paula in view of joining the group.

OVERBERG RARE BIRDS WHATSAPP GROUP: **Steve Peck** kindly volunteered to administer this group and the numbers of participants are increasing systematically. Send a WhatsApp to Steve at 081 817 3223 to join this group – it is fun!

BIRDLIFE OVERBERG WEBSITE: **Graeme Hatley** developed a brilliant new club specific website that can be viewed at <https://birdlifeoverberg.org.za/> The ‘Birdfinder Webpages’ that were developed previously had also been added to the website. The website is doing well and events and reports are being updated on a continual basis. Members are encouraged to visit the website regularly to stay abreast of events. We have introduced a section on trip reports and this has proven to be extremely popular. Kindly submit reports of all your trips, even if it is only a morning outing. Contact Graeme at graeme@graemehatley.com to do so.

Carin Malan tabled a proposal to develop a WhatsApp service for paid-up club members to communicate news of forthcoming events and the like. Members of the committee will become administrators of the group so that they can communicate fresh and up to date news on events. This will replace the weekly newsflashes sent out by email, but not the two other mentioned WhatsApp group as these serve different purposes. This proposal was accepted at the AGM and the group will be launched shortly.

6. FINANCIAL REPORT

The financial report was tabled at the AGM and some issues were queried and discussed. An offer was made to show the full list of expenditures over the financial year, but this was deemed unnecessary. The report was submitted for approval at the AGM. This was recommended by Irma Esbach and seconded by Carl Swart. The financial report was therefore accepted. Note that a projected overview of expected expenditures for the next financial was included in the annual report and could be made available to members if required. The appointment of a Treasurer was discussed and this matter will be resolved once Vivie Lombard, our previous Treasurer returns from overseas.

FUNDRAISING: It is understandable that no fundraising was done over the last three years. It was decided that fundraising in future will only be done for specifically identified projects or conservation campaigns. Ally Ditchfield proposed the development of a wall calendar for 2025, but this was not approved at the meeting. Her alternative proposal of the development of carry bags showing important Overberg birds was however supported and should be investigated. The appointment of a coordinator for fundraising efforts should also be considered. **It was recommended that the incoming committee decide on future fundraising efforts.**

- **MEMBERSHIP:** We have managed to keep our membership numbers stable over the last three years despite having lost several members due to a variety of reasons. We currently have 105 paid up members, with 40 family members. 32 new members joined the club in the last year. There were 12 non renewals this year, most of these having moved away. The fact that 15 members had not yet renewed their subs for 2024 despite having received several requests in this regard. A decision was taken to remove these individuals from our address lists and correspondence. We are currently having discussions on increasing our membership numbers in view of sustaining our conservation efforts and would like to invite all members to assist us with ideas and recommendations in this regard.
- **MEMBERSHIP FEES FOR 2025:** A proposal for a 10% increase in membership fees for 2025 was tabled and debated. Such an increase in January 2025 was approved.

7. THE APPOINTMENT OF OFFICE BEARERS FOR 2024/2025:

The following list of committee members was recommended and approved at the AGM:

- CHAIRPERSON AND NEWSLETTERS: Steve Peck
- VICE-CHAIRPERSON AND OUTINGS: Johan van der Westhuizen
- SECRETARY: Jill Wheeler
- TREASURER AND MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY: This will be finalised when Vivie Lombard returns from London
- COORDINATOR OF GUEST SPEAKERS: Ruth Vary
- COORDINATOR OF FUNDRAISING: This is to be decided shortly
- ADDITIONAL SUPPORT: (These members will advise the committee on various matters as and when needed)
- WEBSITE: Graeme Hatley
- CWACS: Carin Malan
- MONTHLY LISTS: Anton Odendal

We thanked those members who had volunteered to serve on the committee and congratulated Steve and Johan for unanimously being selected to lead us into the future.

8. GENERAL: No items were received and the meeting was declared closed.

COMMENT

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to you all for your support over the

years and am happy that the new committee will ensure that BirdLife Overberg remains the great example that it is.

Anton

June 2024.