

NEWS IN BRIEF

Gold Fields gilds the feathers

The SA Ornithological Society received substantial financial support for its proposed Bird Atlas with The Gold Fields Foundation's grant of R50 000 made in Johannesburg.

The theory and practice of managing a large bird population databank was developed by the British Trust for Ornithology and a similar project was initiated in Southern Africa when the SA Bird Atlas Project was officially launched during January 1987. The atlas will undoubtedly become a standard work for biogeographers, ecologists and evolutionary biologists. More important, though, is that an atlas of this nature functions as a central repository for data on six topics of ornithological interest, namely movement patterns, mortality, distribution, seasonality, productivity and abundance.

The scope of this project is sub-continental - that is the whole region south of the Cunene and Zambezi Rivers. The project is also pioneering the use of the public for large-scale data collection. It is intended to publish the atlas by the end of 1996 but until such time the information collected



Mike Tagg (left), for The Gold Fields Foundation, and Dr John Ledger, Chairman of the Southern African Bird Atlas Committee with a helmeted guinea fowl, one of the many birds that will be appearing in the new bird atlas to be produced by SABAP. To assist in getting this project underway, Gold Fields Foundation contributed R50 000.

will serve as a computer-based databank.

The contributions of amateurs is the strength of the project in that their numbers will make coverage of the vast area of Southern Africa possible. Some 3 000 volunteer field-workers

were recruited within the first months of publicizing the SABAP. The enjoyment derived from participation will stand the Bird Population Data Unit in good stead when the public's co-operation is required for future projects.

On presenting the cheque to Dr John Ledger, Chairman of SABAP Steering Committee, Mr Mike Tagg, a Trustee Member of The Gold Fields Foundation said, "The changes in distribution patterns of bird species are very useful indicators of the changes taking place in the environment. Gold Fields believes that the atlassing project will involve not only ornithologists but possibly more importantly, the keen amateur. It will also stimulate greater interest in birds and the environment as a whole."

The Bird Atlas Project is housed at the University of Cape Town and is a collaborative project of numerous people and organisations throughout Southern Africa. The S.A. Nature Foundation provides the channel through which funds are administered on behalf of the sponsors. Editor

WHITE RHINO SURVEY

The Rhino & Elephant Foundation has launched a survey to determine the population status of the White, or square-lipped Rhino, in South Africa to evaluate the growth of this population on both private and public land. The survey will be conducted in private game reserves, like the Sabi Sand complex, Klaserie and Lapalala, and in national reserves like Pilanesberg in Bophuthatswana. It will also be conducted on private farms where populations of White Rhino are known to exist. The survey should be completed by the end of the year when the results will be known by the Rhino & Elephant Foundation.

Danie Buys, a young scientist at the University of Pretoria, who did his M.Sc. on the eland while with the Mammal Research Institute, will undertake the project right away. The primary objectives will be to establish where



Sarel Liebenberg (right), General Manager Communications of Nissan SA, presents the keys for the 4x4 vehicle to Clive Walker, Director of the Rhino & Elephant Foundation. Seated in the vehicle is Danie Buys.

population growth has differed from the expected growth and to identify the positive or negative factors responsible; to evaluate to what extent the introduction of White Rhino to privately-owned land has been successful in improving the animal's status; to identify the likely reasons why some such introductions have been unsuccessful; and to make conclusions on the basis of the management of White Rhino on privately-owned land, and if so, identify corrective action which may be taken to rectify the situation.

Nissan SA has provided a four-wheel drive vehicle for the project, while R.J. Reynolds International, the Camel people, are providing the research grant and petrol grant which will keep Danie in the field. Organisation of the operation and technical back-up will be done by the Rhino & Elephant Foundation.

time to shilly-shally around. Really good, immediate steps must be taken to stop the catches in the nets - on environmental and not just humanitarian grounds," said Mr Richards.

Norman Wynne, Natal Sharks Board deputy director, said he could not comment on Mr Richards's research as he had not read his report. But zoologist Vic Peddemors would be joining the Sharks Board next month to do full-time research into the interaction between dolphins and shark nets and possible ways of preventing accidental capture of the animals.

The research would be financed jointly by the board and the South African National Committee for Oceanographic Research (SANCOR) and Mr Peddemors would be guided by marine mammalogists at the Port Elizabeth Museum.

Mr Wynne said the board was already experimenting with dolphin deterrents.

"Steel braid has been woven into one of our nets to see if it will enhance acoustic reflectability to the dolphins.

But work on dolphin deterrents can begin in earnest only once Mr Peddemors joins us."

Ian Askew, chairman of the board of the Natal Sharks Board, said he did not believe Mr Richards's results were accurate. "With the best will in the world, the poor little guy hasn't enough money or facilities to do what he wants to do. Here's one man in one boat looking at 300 or 400 kilometres of coastline."

Mr Askew said: "We are probably more concerned than Mr Richards about dolphins being caught in the nets, but what is the solution? We are unhappy about catching dolphins. We try not to catch them, we are trying to fabricate new ways of making the nets so we will not catch them. But at certain times of year you will always catch dolphins.

"If it's a toss-up between people being bitten by sharks and catching a number of dolphins in the nets - well you let the public decide. I would not swim in the sea without a shark net and nobody in his right mind should."

Mr Askew added that he thought pollution was a far greater threat to dolphins than shark nets.

Dr John Ledger, director of the Endangered Wildlife Trust, said he "applauded" the Sharks Board's new research project and hoped it would lead to some measure which would address the problem of dolphin capture in the net.

Dr Ledger said the importance of Mr Richards's work had been recognised internationally.

While it looked as if shark nets were here to stay because of the importance of the tourist industry to Natal, Dr Ledger said their use and effects should be reassessed. Either the Sharks Board or an independent body should look into the environmental impact of the nets and see whether there was a more cost-effective way of preventing shark attacks. The nets had affected not only dolphins but the whole ecology of the area.

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Dis fyntjies-trap om die fynbos.

Wanneer 'n mens in die Kogelberg in die ongerepte fynbos staan en die konstruksie van 'n reuse-hidroëlektriese aanleg aanskou, is dit onmoontlik om nie beskermend te voel oor Moeder Natuur se juwele nie.

Hier by Evkom glo ons dat, hoewel ons Suid-Afrika se hulpbronne moet ontwikkel, ons nie skade aan die land se natuurskoon moet aanrig nie. Daarom lig ons elke persoon by die Palmiet-pompopgaarskema en ander konstruksie-terreine deeglik in oor die onskatbare waarde van die natuur. By Palmiet het Evkom ook sy tegnologie met die fynbos-omgewing geïntegreer en die voortbestaan daarvan verder verseker deur die aanstelling van 'n onafhanklike omgewinginvloed-beheerbeampte. Want konstruksieprojekte kom en gaan, maar wanneer fynbos vergaan, is dit vir altyd verlore.

Dit is hoe Evkom se benadering tot die omgewing werk. Dit maak nie saak waar konstruksie beplan word nie; omgewingsopnames identifiseer waardevolle natuurlike hulpbronne, insluitende plant- en dierelewe, vir beskerming - soos toe die "Ouvolk"-

akkedissee by Majuba-kragstasie hervestig is.

Saaddraende bogrond word bewaar en word ná konstruksie weer teruggeplaas om sodoende die natuurlike plantegroei van die gebied asook die grondgebruikpotensiaal te handhaaf. Vullis word beheer sodat dit nie ongewenste diere lok nie. Ons voorkom ook besoedeling en beskerm voëls wat in kragmaste nesmaak.

Al is ons hoof funksie dus om elektrisiteit aan 'n snel groeiende Suid-Afrika te voorsien, sorg ons ook vir daardie tye wanneer u graag die stadsliggies vir die wildernis wil verruil.

As u meer wil weet oor Evkom se omgewingsprogramme, skryf aan Die Kommunikasiebestuurder, Evkom, Posbus 1091, Johannesburg 2000.



Al ons energie vir u.