

THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN SEABIRD GROUP

The Southern African Seabird Group was formed in late 1975 to co-ordinate seabird research in southern Africa. The group now has 90 members, both amateur and professionals, mainly in South Africa, but also a number overseas.

The group's primary interests are all seabirds (coastal and pelagic) on the southern African list. The oceanic islands of the Prince Edward and Tristan da Cunha groups are included. The group aims to co-ordinate seabird research in three main fields: beached-bird censuses, ocean observations and breeding colony censuses. To date monthly beach patrols have started in False Bay, north of Ysterfontein in the South Western Cape and near Port Alfred in the Eastern Cape. It is hoped that regular patrols will start soon at East London and Cape Recife. The patrols endeavour to observe the corpses of beached seabirds for oiling rates, moult and seasonal variations in numbers and age classes. Specimens in good condition are destined for museum collections, while rarer ones in advanced decomposition are saved for skeletal material. Forms are available for beach patrols, along with instructions.

The group occasionally organizes an outing on a grander scale. During April 1977 members visited Jutten Island in Saldanha Bay and ringed 1 336 Swift Tern chicks in a colony of ca. 1 500 pairs. To date 31 have been recovered or controlled and show that Swift Tern disperses as far north as Maputo in Mozambique.

If demand warrants it, ocean trips to 'twitch' albatrosses are planned.

The group produces a 20-40 page bulletin, The Cormorant, which appears twice a year. It publishes research articles and notes, has a 'project and news' section, and reviews important and new seabird books. The bulletin helps to keep in touch with members who cannot take part in an organized beach patrol.

Membership of the group is R2,50 per annum and new members are most welcome. Back numbers of The Cormorant are available at R1,00 each. Address enquiries to: J. Cooper, Convenor, Southern African Seabird Group, c/o FitzPatrick Institute, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch, 7700.