

Cape Parrot Newsletter

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The December issue of the UKZN Philanthropy magazine featured an article about the CPWG. Click here for the magazine:
<https://foundation.ukzn.ac.za/PhilanthropyUKZN-Dec-2023/>

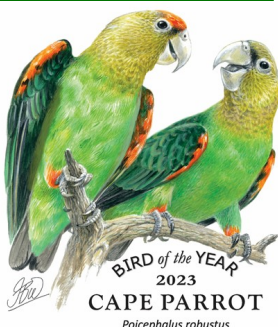
Cape Parrot BOTY 2023

The Cape Parrots' rein as the Bird of the Year (BOTY) has come to an end. BirdLife South Africa has already announced the species to take up the title next year. It has been a good year for raising awareness about Cape Parrots and the threats to the Mistbelt forest ecosystem.

Many thanks to the Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust for sponsoring the Bird of the Year 2023 campaign, and BirdLife South Africa for supporting our efforts. We were successful with creating more awareness about the Cape Parrot with the educational programmes, popular articles, social media and presentations.

Posters, educational material, infographics, fact sheets, etc. are still available for download from the BirdLife SA website. Also if you want to help raise funds for Cape Parrot conservation the T-shirts, pin badges and fluffy toys are still available, while stocks last, through 'BirdLife South Africa's Shop for the Birds!'.

The Cape Parrot Working Group, the Wild Bird Trust's Cape Parrot Project, and all other stakeholders will continue with The Cape Parrot Action Plan which was drafted in 2019. Next year marks the halfway point of the plan's 10 year goals.



For more information see the links below:

BirdLife SA Bird of the Year 2023 — <https://www.birdlife.org.za/bird-of-the-year-2023>

BirdLife South Africa's Shop for the Birds! — <https://shop.birdlife.org.za>

Cape Parrot Project — <https://www.wildbirdtrust.com/projects/cape-parrot-project>

Cape Parrot Action Plan — <https://www.capeparrotactiongroup.org>

Cape Parrot Working Group — <https://cpwg.ukzn.ac.za/about-us>

Cape Parrot Babies



These pictures were sent by William Horsfield from the Amazona Endangered Bird Breeding Facility at the end of August this year. Cape Parrot breeding usually occurs from August to February, but can occur in other months particularly in captive birds. Incubation is by the female and lasts 28 to 30 days. After fledging (55 to 79 days), chicks remain in groups with their parents and continue to be fed by both parents. The female spends more time in the nest than the male and nestlings fledge asynchronously.

The Cape Parrot Working Group supports the captive breeding of registered Cape Parrots. This acts as an insurance policy for the species and to offset demand for wild-caught birds. Genetically sound captive populations can be useful in education programs and displays. The Cape Parrot Studbook is being updated and a Cape Parrot DNA Bank is being established. The studbook aims to provide an accurate up-to-date overview of all Cape Parrots kept in captivity. The details of birds that are both dead and alive are maintained in the studbook. Dead birds are of interest as they provide background details on the relatedness of individuals. It is a resource that contains information which is useful to assist the conservation of the species both in captivity and the wild. As with most parrot species Cape's are relatively difficult to observe in the wild, and whilst not mirroring wild populations, aviculture records can still provide important information.

At first nestlings have a pink appearance, covered with a sparse white down which gets thicker as they grow older. At 15 days old, pin feathers begin appearing on the forehead. At about 35 days of age, green tail feathers begin to break free of the quills. When chicks emerge from the nest, each resembles an adult female in colouring i.e. with coral pink foreheads.



Learn About Birds 2023

BirdLife South Africa hosted its 6th Learn About Birds (LAB) conference on 24 to 26 May 2023 at the Wilderness Hotel. The conference included talks on various topics relating to birds and there was a session focused on forest conservation and research, which highlighted recent Cape Parrot research. Prof Michael Cherry gave the keynote on what can be done to address declines in forest-dependent bird species. He highlighted that there are good laws in place to protect forests but the problem is very poor implementation and enforcement of these. Prof Colleen Downs then presented on 25 years of the Cape Parrot census (i.e. CPBBD) discussing the trends and emphasizing its contribution to their conservation. Dr Francis Brooke presented on Cape Parrot diet and their use of about 36 tree species, both indigenous and exotic, and posed the question of pecans possibly being preferred as parrots will feed on these even when indigenous fruit is available. Prof Sandi Willows-Munro filled in the gap of an absent speaker and gave a presentation on the gene flow between the different subpopulations cautioning that drought potentially has the highest impact to the future of the overall population. Cassie Carstens then shared his experiences and observations about Cape Parrot nest site selection, of which we understand very little about. They seem to use other cavity nesters to find potential nest sites and are a little fussy. This may explain why many of our nest box provision attempts have not worked in the past as we still don't fully understand their criteria for selection. Dr Jessica Leaver spoke about nest sites of Cape Parrots as well focusing on the effect of timber harvesting. Her management recommendations were that larger, and also damaged, trees need to be preserved.



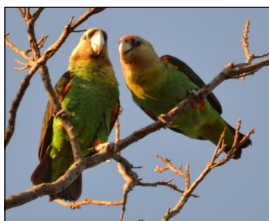
Cape Parrot Big Birding Day 2023

This year was the 26th count of the national Cape Parrot Big Birding Day (CPBBD). KwaZulu-Natal and the former Transkei counted the central Cape Parrot subpopulation on 6 and 7 May 2023. The southern subpopulation, i.e. the Amatholes (Stutterheim, Hogsback, Fort Beaufort), and the northern subpopulation in Limpopo, counted a few weeks earlier on 22 and 23 April 2023. The total count was 1952 Cape Parrots in the wild which is the highest ever recorded in the 26 years of counting. The maximum number of Cape Parrots counted was 751 in the southern Amathole subpopulation (602 were counted in pecan nut orchards in mid-April), 1102 in the central subpopulation (115 former Transkei and 987 southern KwaZulu-Natal), and 99 in the northern subpopulation.

The subpopulations were mainly concentrated in clusters of forests with nearby pecan nut orchards. Although the past year has had good rains, with increasing ambient temperatures (especially extremely hot days) and extreme rainfall events, the flowering and fruiting of many tree species appear to have been affected. Pecan nuts are high in protein, unsaturated fats, and fibre, and are a calcium, magnesium, and potassium source. In some areas, high numbers of Cape Parrots were seen feeding in pecan orchards for the first time in the area in more than 60 years.

Overall there was good participation for the CPBBD this year and the record high was a nice way to highlight the bird of the year. We are grateful to all who contributed this year, and we hope you participate again, so do note that the 2024 count will be a little earlier in April.

**The next Cape Parrot Big Birding Day will be on:
20 & 21 April 2024**



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<https://cpwg.ukzn.ac.za/about-us>

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