



# INTEGRATED REPORT

## 2022-2023







# CONTENTS



Message from our Chairperson	4
Message from our Chief Executive Officer	6
Rehabilitation	9
Veterinary	16
Research	26
African Penguin & Seabird Rangers	33
Preparedness & Response	40
Global Oiled Wildlife Response Systems (GOWRS) & Oil Conferences	50
Advocacy	52
Government Liaison	56
Responsible Fisheries Alliance (RFA)	58
Namibian Foundation for the Conservation of Seabirds (NAMCOB)	60
Environmental Education, Awareness & Skills Development	64
Statement of Comprehensive Income	77
Current Staff & Board of Directors	78
Funders & Supporters	79

# MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRPERSON

In its 55th year of existence, it is impressive to see how far SANCCOB has come since the initial vision of Althea Westphal in 1968, and I believe that if she could see us now, she would be extremely proud. While known for being responsive to distressed seabirds, most notably the African penguin, SANCCOB is now renowned for its overall seabird conservation work and is relied upon by other organisations for its expertise, especially in the areas of preparedness and response, research, and disease surveillance and the management of disease outbreaks. I am deeply appreciative of my fellow Director, the staff, interns and volunteers for their commendable efforts and successes this year.

SANCCOB's consultancy work in terms of preparedness and response has become a sought-after service with government authorities, environmental NGOs and the oil and gas industry, especially now at a time when oil and gas exploration has increased, and the safety of wildlife must be prioritised. With years of experience in preparedness capabilities, we offer expertise in oiled wildlife preparedness contingency plans, technical planning, and theoretical and practical training. With the decrease in the number of seabirds

affected by oiling events, we believe that our concerted efforts and services consultancy to ensure contingency plans are in place and executed, has contributed to a positive impact.

On the Namibian front, with NAMCOB now officially registered, the recruitment of personnel is underway to employ a Director, an Office Administrator and four Seabird Rangers on Halifax, Ichaboe, Mercury and Possession islands. A dedicated marine conservation centre will be built to admit seabirds for rehabilitation, along with an education and interactive space, souvenir shop, and coffee shop to contribute to its financial sustainability.

In Cape Town, I am looking forward to the expansion of the Chick Rearing Unit and the new development of an Education and Visitor Centre. These two capital projects will undeniably enhance SANCCOB's mission to bolster the wild populations of African penguins and other seabirds and will provide an opportunity to expand our environmental education and awareness impact. The centre will also provide an opportunity to generate sustainable income via the provision of a larger training facility, a coffee shop with seating views of Table



Mountain and the beautiful Rietvlei Nature Reserve, and a souvenir shop. Thank you to the donors who have recognised the value of these projects and who have generously assisted in providing funding.

The recent employment of a dedicated Conservation Impact Manager to oversee the Penguin and Seabird Ranger programme that now includes ten Penguin and Seabird Rangers, presents a way forward to standardise data collection from the monitored colonies, bringing together techniques and experiences from all the colonies, allowing us to measure our conservation impact and inform managing authorities of the findings. During this year, we have continued to strengthen our partnerships with conservation authorities, which include the City of Cape Town, CapeNature, South African National Parks and Robben Island Museum, and I am grateful for their positive collaborations with SANCCOB.

Looking forward to the year ahead, we have acquired a two-year funded postdoctoral Research Fellow to provide in-depth analysis of vital research data collected over the years. This data is regarding the survival and successful breeding of African

penguins originating from wild-origin eggs incubated at SANCCOB, which will enable us to measure the impact of our work on the overall species population.

Financially, we have once again received an unqualified audit opinion for the 2023 Annual Financial Statements by BDO South Africa Inc. and the statements reflect a healthy financial performance and position.

To each individual and entity who donated for the benefit of southern African seabirds, in a variety of ways, whether it was financial or with time, or in-kind, we thank you for your support. To the SANCCOB staff, well done on a remarkable year; your hard work and dedication is truly inspirational.

Sincerely,

**INGE CILLIERS**  
**Chairperson**



# MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

What an exciting year it has been, as SANCCOB celebrated its 55th year of conserving seabirds in southern Africa. As I reflect on the year that has passed, I am amazed at the volume of conservation work undertaken and the great achievements by the SANCCOB team. Together with our valued partners and generous funders, enormous efforts were made to overcome the challenges that southern African seabirds face.

As 2022 drew to a close, approximately 400 African penguin chicks were admitted to SANCCOB Cape Town's seabird hospital due to abandonment by moulting parents. This is an occurrence that we regularly see but this year was different; this year we were already dealing with the screening of all admitted seabirds showing symptoms of high pathogenicity avian influenza. Unfortunately, but inevitably, we had admitted asymptomatic birds from the colonies that were carrying the virus. At the end of November 2022, we confirmed the outbreak of the disease within the Cape Town seabird hospital and were placed under quarantine by the Western Cape State Veterinary Services. The quarantine meant that we were unable to admit any new birds or release any rehabilitated birds, resulting

in us establishing an off-site facility for the admission and care of new seabirds. The rapid spread within the hospital affected most of the African penguin chicks that were being hand-reared, however, due to stringent biosecurity measures and separate quarantined areas that were closely monitored, very few penguins developed severe clinical symptoms, and we were delighted that the quarantine was lifted on the 6th of February 2023. I acknowledge and salute the SANCCOB staff, interns and volunteers for their hard work and dedication during this challenging time, and appreciate the support received from funders, who donated over and above their usual donations towards the disease outbreak requirements. In the end, only eight birds suffered severe symptoms; one died from the disease and the remaining seven were humanely euthanised. This is a remarkable outcome and a true testament to the commitment and care taken by everyone involved.

In 2022 the establishment of an "Independent International Science Panel" was announced by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), to provide longer-term guidance to the Minister, on how to balance the



future of the African penguin with the commercial, subsistence and social demands of the fishing industry. Recently the Minister shared the outcome of the panel and her decision which includes maintaining the existing partial closures to fishing around the six main African penguin breeding colonies until a final agreement is reached by December 2023, between the conservation sector and the fishing industry. If no agreement is reached by then, these closures will remain in place for a period of ten years with a scientific review of their effectiveness taking place after six years. This has been a long and arduous road travelled by the conservation sector and we commend the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) on the appointment of an expert panel who prepared a well-balanced report.

In October 2022, SANCCOB joined the Responsible Fisheries Alliance (RFA) alongside WWF South Africa, BirdLife South Africa, Oceana, Sea Harvest and I&J. Together, members of the alliance contribute resources and expertise, providing a forum for environmental NGOs and responsible fishing companies to work together for a healthy ecosystem. In the first quarter of 2023, a strategy workshop was

held where strategic objectives of the RFA were formalised to drive change towards environmental sustainability in the South African fishing industry. We are very excited to be a member of this alliance and look forward to promising outcomes for seabirds in southern Africa.

In 2022, we shared our vision to build a new Education and Visitor Centre at SANCCOB Cape Town to improve our environmental education and skills transfer facilities. However, shortly thereafter, we had to prioritise the increased need to artificially incubate and hatch wild-origin African penguin eggs, and hand-rear African penguin chicks. Due to the increased occurrence of extreme weather events and limited food available due to years of competing for food with the fishing industry, we have seen an increase in admissions of wild-origin chicks and eggs, and it has become necessary to improve our capacity to care for them. We therefore embarked on a new fundraising campaign to fund the expansion of the existing Chick Rearing Unit in Cape Town. Some very exciting news to share is that the construction of both the Chick Rearing Unit and the Education and Visitor Centre is planned to take place simultaneously and will commence toward the end of 2023.

We are thankful to have had another successful financial year and the resources available to create two new full-time positions; namely, an Artificial Incubation and Hand-Rearer, for our increased operations in the Chick Rearing Unit, and a Conservation Impact Manager, to drive and measure our conservation impact. We are also in the fortunate position to be able to appoint three additional Penguin and Seabird Rangers in the year ahead – an additional Ranger in Simon's Town, one on Bird Island, and a new Ranger on Dassen Island. This vital conservation project has expanded rapidly, and we now have ten African Penguin and Seabird Rangers situated across the five main African penguin breeding colonies, conducting daily monitoring, collection of scientific data, and enabling swift response to seabirds in distress.

SANCCOB's 2022/2023 integrated report further highlights our various projects, successes, and challenges, and shares the support received from our steadfast funders who have made it possible to expand our conservation efforts to reverse the decline of seabird populations in the wild.

A sincere thank you to our Board of Directors for their expertise, guidance, and unwavering support. To the SANCCOB staff, interns, and volunteers, a heartfelt thank you for your determination, hard work, and commitment. It is a privilege to be part of such an outstanding team.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "N Maskell". The signature is stylized, with the first letter 'N' being large and circular, and the last name 'Maskell' written in a cursive-like script.

**NATALIE MASKELL**  
**Chief Executive Officer**



# REHABILITATION



During the reporting period the SANCCOB teams from both the Cape Town and Gqeberha facilities admitted just over 2,400 seabirds into care, consisting of 43 different species. The reasons for admittance include abandonment due to extreme weather events and by moulting parents, emaciation, human wildlife conflict (vehicle collisions, fishing line entanglement, fishing hook ingestion and domestic dog attacks), disease and trauma.

1,207 of the patients admitted were African penguins; 299 were admitted to the Gqeberha facility, with 81% rescued from Bird Island. 908 African penguins were admitted to the Cape Town facility, with the highest number of birds being rescued from Stony Point (34%) and Simon's Town (24%).

Winter rains during April and May 2022 had a devastating impact on the African penguin colony situated on Bird Island, Algoa Bay. Heavy rainfall caused penguin parents to abandon their nests, leaving their helpless chicks to drown. Luckily, the Bird Island Penguin and Seabird Rangers were swift to respond, and 118 hypothermic chicks were rescued, stabilised, and transferred to SANCCOB for care. Winter rain also impacted the Western Cape, and SANCCOB Cape Town admitted 54 African penguin chicks in June 2022, rescued from flooded nests from the Stony Point colony.

SANCCOB Gqeberha experienced an increased number of penguins admitted with predator-related injuries caused by either sharks or seals between June and October 2022; this is the period when shark numbers peak around Bird Island. The increase in shark numbers at this time of the year coincides with the period when seal pups start to venture into the water for the first time after weaning.



During this time, injured penguins were recovered on a weekly, and sometimes daily basis on Bird Island. The Bird Island Penguin and Seabird Rangers performed a sterling job rescuing and stabilising these birds until they could be transported to the Gqeberha facility for further treatment.

During September, a controlled vegetation burn was planned on Robben Island; however, many African penguins found the vegetation to be ideal nesting sites, which meant that they needed to be removed prior to the burn. SANCCOB sent a team to assist the the Robben Island Penguin and Seabird Ranger to ensure all vegetation stacks were cleared of penguin chicks and other wildlife before any burning commenced.

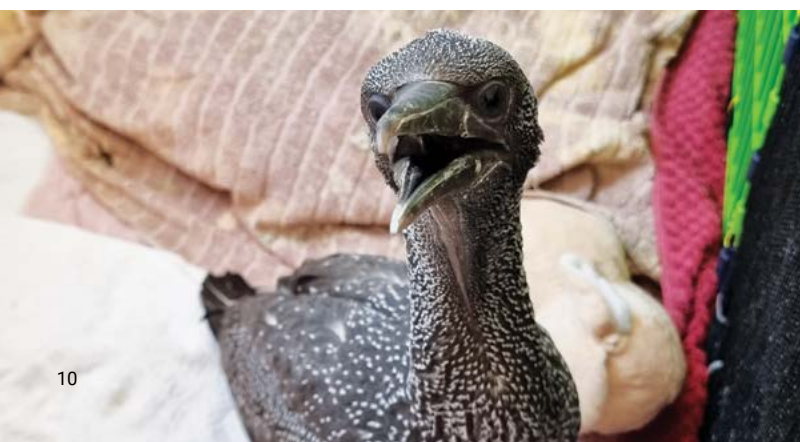
The annual intake of abandoned chicks due to moulting parents during October and November 2022 reached 452 and fortunately, the Cape Town team were well prepared for a busy season of chick rearing.

Unfortunately, despite increased biosecurity measures in place, SANCCOB suffered an outbreak of avian influenza which coincided with the end-of-year chick intake; more information about this challenging time is further described in the veterinary report of this publication.

Flying seabirds accounted for 1,214 of the admissions for both the Cape Town and Gqeberha facilities. The Cape Town facility admitted 1,077 flying birds, with the top three admission species being Kelp gulls, Hartlaub's gulls, and Cape cormorants. The reason for admissions for many of these flying birds was attributed to suspected botulism, wing injuries and emaciation.

The Gqeberha facility admitted 137 flying birds, with the bulk of their admissions comprising of Cape gannets and Kelp gulls. Endangered Cape gannet admissions were mostly due to injuries, poor body condition, and abandonment.

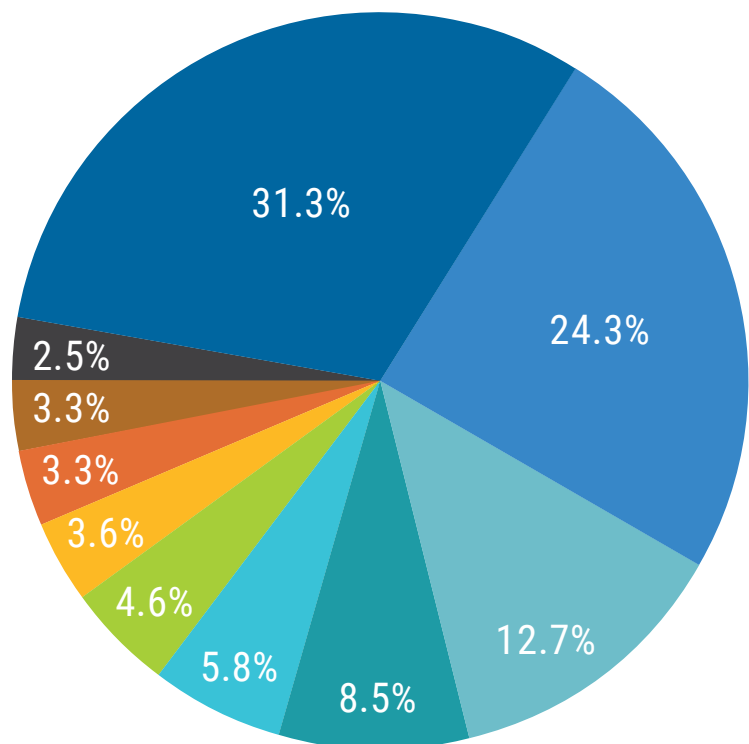
*Top left and right: A young African penguin chick is admitted to SANCCOB Cape Town for hand-rearing.  
Bottom left: SANCCOB annually receives Cape gannet juveniles from Lambert's Bay, rescued in partnership with CapeNature.*



# HIGHEST SEABIRD ADMISSIONS BY AREA

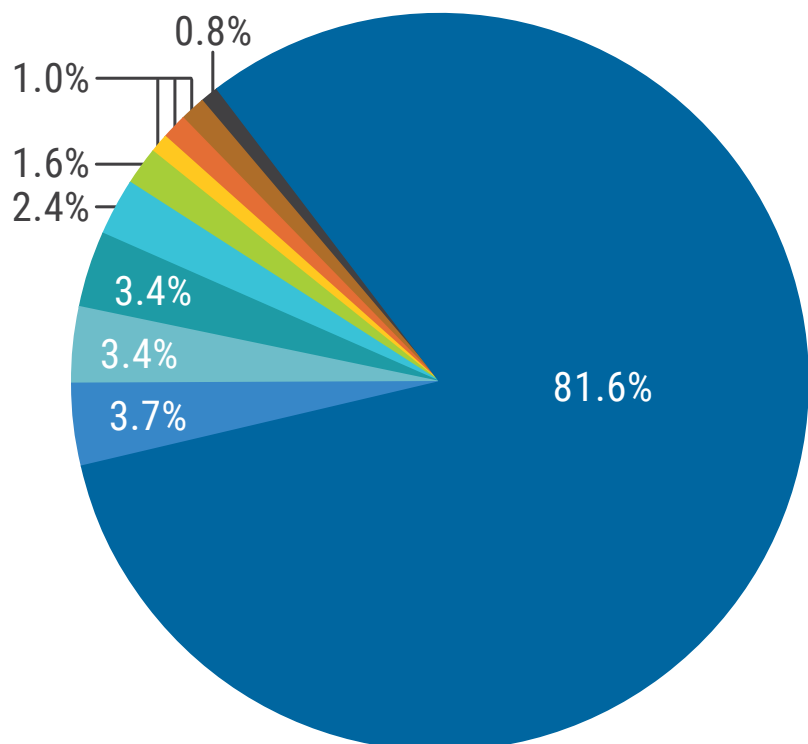
## CAPE TOWN

- Betty's Bay
- Simon's Town
- Bloubergstrand
- Melkbosstrand
- Sea Point
- Robben Island
- Muizenberg
- Milnerton
- Big Bay
- Fish Hoek



## GQEBERHA

- Bird Island
- Cape Recife Nature Reserve
- Summerstrand
- Jeffreys Bay
- Bluewater Bay
- Cannon Rocks
- Gqeberha Harbour
- Kings Beach
- Boknes
- Jeffreys Bay





# LUCKY NUMBER 13

On 13 February 2023, a young Cape gannet was admitted to SANCCOB Cape Town from Malgas Island, along the West Coast; a lucky survivor of a Great white pelican predation attempt, a species known to prey on young gannet chicks. The pelican had caught the young gannet and had taken flight with the chick trapped in its

beak. However, the pelican lost its grip and dropped the chick onto the rocks below on Malgas Island. The lucky young gannet was rescued and safely brought to SANCCOB for a veterinary examination and treatment. Amazingly, the gannet avoided any serious injuries, completed its rehabilitation and was released two months later in False Bay.

## ENDANGERED CAPE CORMORANTS – TREATING A SENSITIVE SPECIES

The challenge of finding enough food affects all seabirds reliant on sardines and anchovies. For many years now, we have witnessed extremely emaciated Cape cormorants admitted to our facilities. 112 of the 151 Cape cormorants admitted were rescued as dangerously underweight and weak fledglings. Healthy wild fledglings typically weigh between 800g – 1kg whereas these patients weighed between 500g – 600g. Cape cormorants are an extremely delicate species to work with, especially when they are so compromised. Caring for emaciated Cape cormorants is complex and requires a detailed protocol which focuses

on immediate stabilisation by providing warmth and fluid therapy. The majority of these cases require an intravenous drip that provides essential fluids and electrolytes. Supplements are administered via injection and a specialised formula that is warmed and diluted is offered in small amounts to avoid regurgitation. A dedicated and temperature controlled Intensive Care Unit is used for this species and only highly skilled staff and interns are permitted to work with them. Despite best efforts, many cormorants do not survive, due to organ failure resulting from poor body mass.







## HATCHING A PLOVER – A FIRST FOR SANCCOB

Found abandoned in Kleinmond, a small coastal town in the Overberg municipality, SANCCOB Cape Town admitted two White-fronted plover eggs during November 2022. One egg hatched at the tiny weight of 6.24g, but unfortunately its sibling egg was not viable and failed to hatch. The little plover chick was a very enthusiastic feeder and was free feeding within a few days post-hatch. To avoid imprinting on humans, and to ensure

the chick did not become lonely, a small mirror accompanied the chick, as well as a feather duster to mimic a parent plover and vocalisations of White-fronted plovers were played in the background. Two months after hatching, the White-fronted plover had grown into a juvenile and was successfully released in Grotto Bay on the West Coast, and has since been resighted twice, thanks to the metal SAFring band fitted to its leg prior to release.

## HOPE FOR AFRICAN PENGUINS: EXCITING NEWS FROM DE HOOP

SANCCOB, in partnership with BirdLife South Africa and CapeNature, continue to release African penguin fledglings at De Hoop Nature Reserve with the goal of re-establishing a penguin colony. A total of 184 fledglings have been released at De Hoop since 2021. The identified area is protected by a perimeter predator-proof fence and features artificial decoys positioned in the colony to attract penguin passers-by. The area has an adequate fish abundance due to being in a marine protected area, and the hope is that these released fledglings will imprint on the site,

return to moult and even call De Hoop their home. During the reporting period, three separate releases were conducted with a total of 96 fledglings released. On each of these releases, two fledglings were fitted with data loggers to track their movements after release, which provides valuable information for our research work.

Planning for the release of these hand-reared penguins requires careful consideration. Prior to release, each bird has its feather waterproofing tested, is weighed, has its blood analysed and is fitted with a



Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT). The weather is monitored closely to ensure that environmental conditions are optimal for release. An early start is the order of the day as De Hoop Nature Reserve is more than three hours away from SANCCOB's Cape Town facility by car, and the route is carefully planned to avoid heavy traffic and extreme weather. On arrival, the birds are placed into a pre-release enclosure for one day to settle and orientate themselves before they are released into the reserve, and enter the ocean in their own time.

During a site visit in October 2022, two chicks were spotted emerging out of

a well-hidden nest amongst the rocks, which was the first observation of successful breeding in the colony since the inception of the project. The breeding pair were of wild origin which was a positive sign that the conditions were suitable for breeding. The start of a new year brought more exciting news to De Hoop after approximately twenty African penguins came ashore to undergo moult. Many of these moulters were juveniles transitioning into their first official tuxedo, this could be a very positive outcome for this site, hoping that these young adults will return to De Hoop to breed in the coming years.

## AFRICAN PENGUIN CHICK BOLSTERING

Hatching at around 60g, eyes shut and incredibly vulnerable, SANCCOB becomes custodians of African penguin chicks for their time in our care, before we can successfully release them back into the wild, a process from hatch to release that takes approximately three months. Witnessing the life cycle of African penguins is extraordinary, and provides a newfound respect to penguin parents, because it is hard work! A group of dedicated staff and interns work passionately round the clock to ensure these chicks receive the best care possible with the end goal of bolstering the

wild African penguin population. A total of 21 interns were recruited during the period under review and underwent intensive training to contribute to this important cause.

SANCCOB has successfully released a total of 8,458 African penguin chicks since the start of the Chick Bolstering Project some 17 years ago in 2006. With an 81% release rate, this vital conservation intervention has added value to the wild population, demonstrated by the resighting of hand-reared penguins post-release. The importance of artificial incubation of

African penguin eggs and the hand-rearing of chicks is listed as a conservation intervention in the African Penguin Biodiversity Management Plan, issued by the South African Government.

African penguin chicks and eggs are rescued by SANCCOB's Penguin and Seabird Rangers that are strategically placed at penguin colonies along the Western and Eastern Cape's coastline, in collaboration with conservation authorities. They play a pivotal role in monitoring, rescuing and stabilising abandoned eggs and chicks before they are transferred to SANCCOB's facilities for specialised care. The majority of patients admitted to SANCCOB are African penguin eggs and chicks. A total of 681 African penguin chicks were admitted to the Cape Town seabird facility, of which 139 were chicks that had hatched from eggs incubated in the Chick Rearing Unit, and had been hand-reared, while the Gqeberha seabird facility admitted a total of 153 chicks.

During the reporting period 322 African penguin eggs were admitted to the Cape Town Chick Rearing Unit due to abandonment. The majority of the eggs rescued originated from the Simon's Town area; 306 eggs were admitted during the summer months from January to March 2023, with 250 of these being abandoned by their parents due to heat stress. Eggs are assessed on arrival to determine whether they are viable. Unfortunately, 87 eggs were not deemed viable on arrival and 96 eggs failed to hatch during artificial incubation. There are several reasons that could explain why embryos fail to develop and, in this case, it is likely that the extreme heat and humid conditions played a large role. By the end of March 2023, 139 eggs had successfully hatched, demonstrating that this intervention is worthwhile and furthermore, that pre-emptive removal prior to extreme weather events is beneficial.


## SKILLS TRANSFER

Skills development forms an integral part of our work; this ranges from theoretical training to practical, hands-on skills being transferred to eager participants. SANCCOB's daily operations depend on dedicated interns and volunteers which include seabird volunteers, interns, first responders, and drivers who selflessly donate their time to the labour-intensive work of seabird rehabilitation and support functions.

Apart from the training provided daily to the international and local volunteers and interns, the Seabird Rehabilitation Department provided training workshops to a variety of individuals and institutions. A total of 74 individuals received training, including South African and Namibian government officials, as well as an individual from Tristan da Cunha.



# VETERINARY

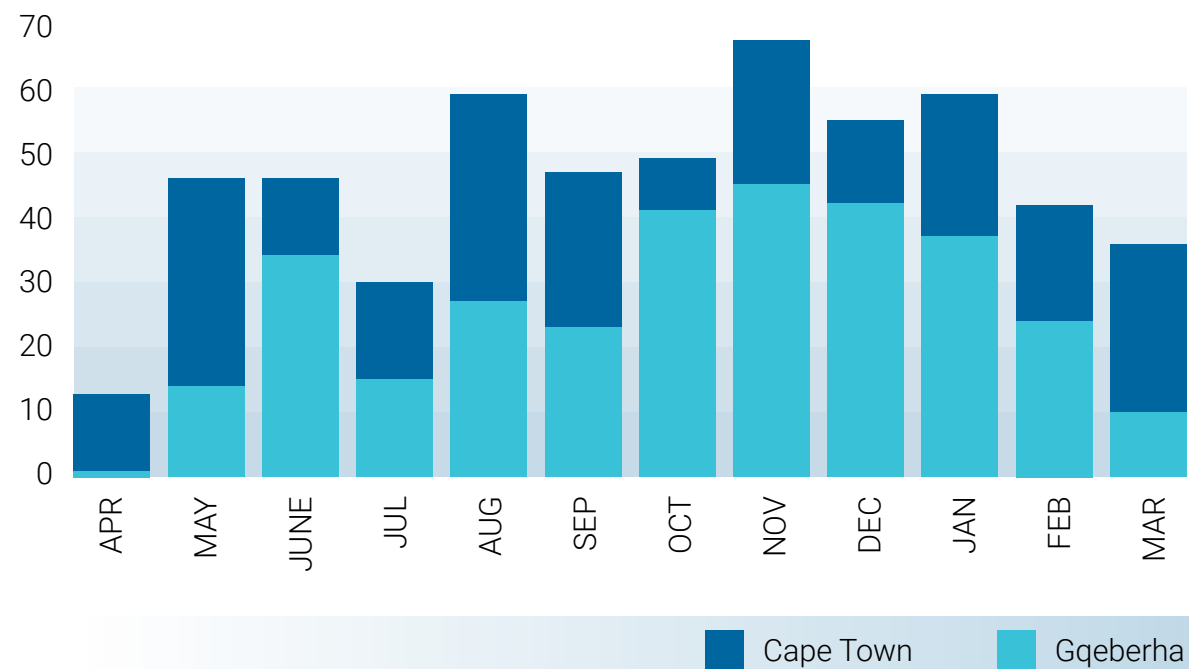


Seabird veterinary medicine presents many challenges, particularly when treating endangered species. Apart from abandoned African penguin chicks, all the seabirds admitted to SANCCOB for rehabilitation receive an initial medical assessment and most seabirds require veterinary treatment. The care required ranges from gentle stabilisation and feeding of underweight patients to the treatment of infectious diseases caused by bacteria, fungi and protozoa and the treatment of wounds. SANCCOB's veterinary team, led by Dr David Roberts, once again had a busy and productive year. Aside from treating critical patients, the team monitors the health of the other seabirds undergoing rehabilitation with weekly microscopic blood smear evaluation and response to the ongoing high pathogenicity avian influenza panzootic.



# VETERINARY PROCEDURES

## SURGICAL VETERINARY PROCEDURES AT SANCCOB (CAPE TOWN AND GQEBERHA)

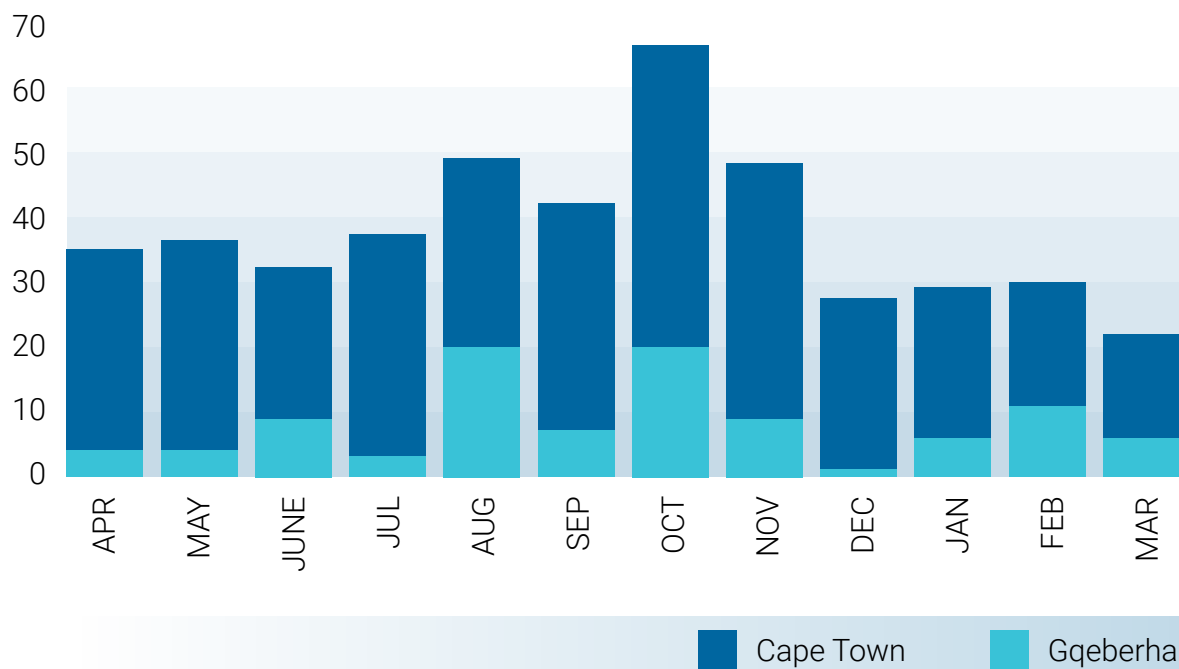


*African penguins are assessed during a weekly check led by Dr David Roberts.*



## X-RAY STUDIES

### AT SANCCOB (CAPE TOWN AND GQEBERHA)



*African penguin chick admissions and initial stabilisation at SANCCOB Cape Town.*







*A variety of seabird species tested positive for Avian Influenza at SANCCOB.*

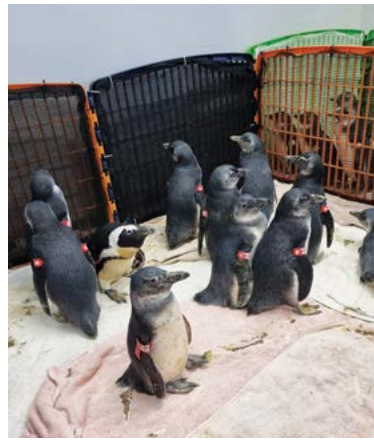
# AVIAN INFLUENZA

## WILD SEABIRDS

In 2022, the H5N1 strain of high pathogenicity avian influenza continued to affect seabirds in South Africa. The disease spread across Europe and North America, causing unprecedented devastation to wild birds, especially seabirds. In response to this panzootic, Dr David Roberts assisted with hosting an online presentation and workshop from a South African perspective and SANCCOB's response to similar outbreaks in wild seabirds. South Africa's outbreaks had been one of the most severe ever recorded in wild birds and so our experiences are extremely valuable. The online presentation invitation was

extended to interested people from conservation and rehabilitation organisations, and government, around the world, and attracted over 50 participants. Fortunately, South Africa did not experience the severe outbreaks in wild seabirds during this reporting period, compared to previous years, but the disease continued to affect and kill seabirds, especially African penguins as observed in the Dyer Island and Simon's Town African penguin colonies. The disease remains a grave concern for seabirds globally, but it is particularly worrying for endangered species.

# SANCCOB UNDER QUARANTINE DUE TO AVIAN INFLUENZA OUTBREAK



*The off-site quarantine facility, which was used to observe and screen African penguins for symptoms of avian influenza.*

High pathogenicity avian influenza severely affected SANCCOB Cape Town during this reporting period. When the disease started to affect African penguins in Simon's Town during August 2022, an off-site quarantine facility was established at the Oil Spill Response Limited (OSRL) facility based in Durbanville. The off-site facility was used to accommodate penguins that were admitted from affected colonies, to observe and screen them for symptoms of avian influenza, before admitting them to our Cape Town facility.

Unfortunately, we still couldn't prevent an outbreak of avian influenza in the Cape Town facility during late November 2022. The virus spread rapidly affecting most of the >400 African penguin chicks undergoing rehabilitation. Fortunately, very few penguins developed severe clinical symptoms; most of the affected birds were asymptomatic or the only symptom was cloudiness of one or both eyes. Only eight birds suffered severe

symptoms; one died from the disease and the remaining seven were euthanised to reduce suffering.

The priority was to reduce the spread of the virus by increasing biosecurity wherever possible. All cleaning and disinfection measures were intensified, and, wherever possible the birds were separated into different groups with their own equipment and dedicated staff. Symptomatic birds were moved into isolation areas with stricter biosecurity and these measures prevented the virus from spreading to our nursery and permanent resident birds.

During the outbreak, SANCCOB was placed under quarantine by the Western Cape State Veterinary Services to mitigate the risk of spreading avian influenza to wild birds. Under this notice, SANCCOB was prohibited from admitting new seabirds into the facility and from releasing birds back to the wild until the outbreak was over. It was





*Quarantine and recovery at SANCCOB Cape Town.*

incredibly challenging to continue to care for so many birds, with the added biosecurity measures, especially once penguins were ready for release. To continue our essential rescue and rehabilitation work under these conditions, an offsite quarantine facility at OSRL was converted into a temporary rehabilitation centre, where we could admit and care for newly rescued birds without exposing them to the virus circulating in the main rehabilitation facility. Only when it was possible to separate birds carrying avian influenza from those free from the virus and

prove through negative PCR testing that they were no longer shedding the virus, we were permitted to once again release penguins. Quarantine was finally lifted on 6 February 2023, after testing all the birds at SANCCOB to prove that none of the birds in care were shedding the virus.

The avian influenza outbreak at SANCCOB was a taxing time for all our staff, interns and volunteers. We are pleased that we successfully controlled the spread of the virus with very few casualties.

*It was a joyous day when the quarantine was lifted and we were able to release birds again.*





# AFRICAN PENGUIN HEALTH SURVEY

SANCCOB continued with the collaborative study on African penguin health, in association with African-German Partners for Ocean Knowledge, and the MeerWissen initiative funded by the German Government (GIZ), which focuses on avian influenza and other diseases, as well as parasites. Dr David Roberts joined two expeditions to continue with field work for the African Penguin Health Survey. The team visited

Possession Island in Namibia in April 2022 and Bird Island in Algoa Bay the following month. During the survey, measurements were taken, and samples collected from wild, adult penguins to look at health parameters. What was especially interesting was the detection of avian influenza antibodies which would indicate previous exposure to the virus.





Left to right: AP239: April - before admission; June - wound cleaning; June - stabilisation; August - after surgery

## VETERINARY CASES

### SEVERE WOUNDS

We continue to admit seabird patients suffering from severe wounds, many caused by predators.

An African penguin allocated the patient number AP239 was admitted on the 8th of April from the Stony Point colony with a severe wound to the abdomen, with a large area of missing skin. For the first two weeks at SANCCOB, the penguin underwent a period of stabilisation and gentle wound cleaning. The veterinary team started a series of surgical procedures to debride and close the wound. As the wound was close to the knee, where there is a lot of movement, it was in a difficult position for wound healing. After seven surgical

procedures the wound closed, and the resulting scar is much smaller, which is a great outcome considering the extent of the injury. Due to the severity of the wound which caused significant feather damage, this patient will need to moult before release can be considered. This bird will remain in care until it moults to the end of 2023.

This is just one example of the African penguin patients rescued with severe wounds that are the most common surgical cases treated at SANCCOB. Although it is not always possible to confirm with absolute certainty what type of predator is the culprit, most are caused by Cape fur seals and sharks.

### ORTHOPAEDIC SURGERY

It is always challenging to successfully treat fractured bones in wild birds. There were several successful cases during the reporting period, including a fractured wing

in a Great white pelican and fractured legs in penguins, including one young chick that was attacked by a Cape clawless otter.



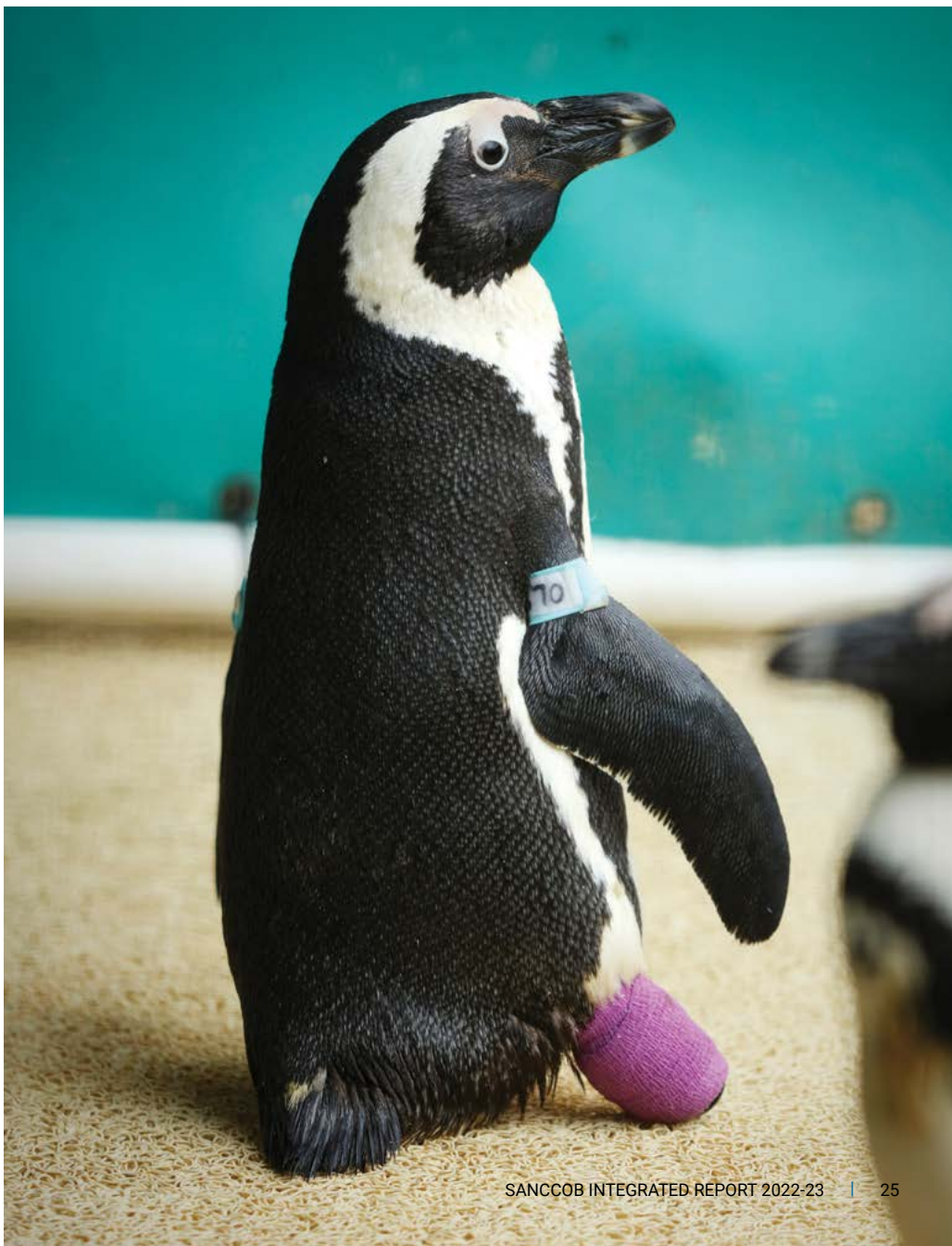




## AMPUTATIONS AND BOOTIES

African penguins are often admitted to SANCCOB with severely injured feet and legs. Sometimes the injuries are so severe that it is not possible to save the damaged foot. Fortunately, penguins can adapt and have demonstrated the ability to live and breed successfully in the wild with only one foot because they mainly use their flippers for swimming. This year, improvements were made to the postoperative care of amputee patients by making special penguin

booties to provide extra support and to protect their stumps during the healing process. These new booties are made from recycled wetsuit material so they are more comfortable and easier to replace than bandages and the penguins can swim with them on. The veterinary and rehabilitation teams also improved the design for the splints that are used to support injured hocks and even made some tiny booties for gulls that had lost a foot.





# RESEARCH



## THE AFRICAN PENGUIN MONITORING SYSTEM (APMS) – SANCCOB/BIRDLIFE SOUTH AFRICA COLLABORATION

The lack of food is one of the main drivers of the current decline in African penguin numbers. An improved understanding of the birds' survival rates and their ability to find food at sea to provide for their chicks is crucial for the conservation of the species.

Historically, flipper bands were used on African penguins to assess their long-term survival; for example, after the MV Treasure oil spill when SANCCOB and others cleaned 20,000 African penguins, recent analyses show that these birds survived just as well as non-oiled birds after rehabilitation. This information is known because of being able to identify the previously oiled birds by their flipper bands. Since 2013, Passive Integrated Transponders (PIT) have been used to individually mark African penguins, including over 7,000 penguins that have been released from SANCCOB. These birds, together with over 5,000 penguins that have been deployed with transponders in the wild, are now monitored at all main colonies using ground readers, which are long cables that can detect a bird with a PIT when walking over it on its way to sea or back to its nest. SANCCOB's Penguin

and Seabird Rangers also use hand-held readers when conducting nest checks, thus we are obtaining valuable information on the survival, movement, as well as breeding of thousands of marked birds each year. Re-encounters of transpondered penguins are nowadays not only used for long-term survival assessments (a valuable input parameter in any population model to better



understand the risk of extinction), but also to assess the effects of the hand-rearing and release of African penguin chicks from SANCCOB on the overall population trends, the feasibility of establishing a new colony by translocating hand-reared chicks, and possible remote monitoring of breeding success. During the current reporting period, a total of 631 African penguins were transpondered in the wild colonies, which includes 387 fledglings. In 2022, the transponder project was extended to Namibia where 61 African penguins were transpondered on Possession and Halifax islands and ground readers will be installed at the main Namibian colonies in the near future.

As all penguins released from SANCCOB are equipped with transponders, over 750 in the Western Cape and 290 in the Eastern Cape joined the wild population of transpondered birds during the reporting period. Many of the penguins released by SANCCOB are being detected by the Penguin and Seabird Rangers and on the ground readers when crossing into the colonies or breeding. We learn a lot of interesting things about their behaviour; SANCCOB hand-reared chicks may, for example, inspect several colonies before deciding where to breed and do not always return to their natal colonies, as previously thought. One of the hand-reared chicks released at the newly established De Hoop colony in 2021 was detected crossing the reader in Simon's Town, its natal colony, in 2022, and it remains to be seen if it will return to De Hoop or Simon's Town to breed, or decide to breed elsewhere. Recent initial analyses indicate that penguins originating from eggs incubated at SANCCOB after being rescued in the wild, survive and breed successfully, but more work will be done in

the coming months to better understand the impact of SANCCOB's work on the overall population. Thanks to funding from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Conservation Grant, SANCCOB will appoint a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the new financial year who will be working at the Centre for Statistics in Ecology, the Environment and Conservation (SEEC) at the University of Cape Town (UCT) and will tackle many of these questions.

All this information on transpondered birds in the wild doesn't tell us much about the birds' struggle to find sufficient food at sea, both for their own survival and for raising their chicks. SANCCOB has been involved in several tracking studies where data loggers or satellite tags are being placed on a limited number of birds to determine where they forage for food while at sea. This data has been crucial in identifying important areas that should be closed to industrial fishing, however this type of research is usually limited to a small number of birds, both due to disturbance issues and funding constraints.

BirdLife South Africa, together with SANCCOB and other partners, have been developing an African Penguin Monitoring System (APMS), consisting of the PIT ground readers and weighbridges. APMS record not only the unique PIT number of a bird crossing in or out of the colony but also its weight, thus giving valuable information on how long a bird needs to forage at sea to obtain a certain amount of food and how much food is brought back to the chicks at the nest. Linked to the tracking data from a limited number of birds, the APMS can provide data on hundreds of birds, from different times



of the year, and provide valuable insights into food availability around the different colonies. These findings will be used to advise conservation actions and fisheries management, and can be an important tool to reduce resource competition as information on fish availability is received almost in real time. SANCCOB is currently

maintaining eleven ground readers in six colonies, of which three (Stony Point, Bird Island and St Croix Island) are currently linked to a weigh-bridge. Plans are underway to extend the APMS network further to cover all seven main colonies and APMS systems are currently being installed on Dyer Island and Robben Island.







## DISEASE SURVEILLANCE AND PREDATOR IDENTIFICATION

Avian influenza has been affecting seabirds in southern Africa since 2018 and disastrous outbreaks have killed hundreds of swift terns in 2018, approximately 25,000 Cape cormorants in 2021, and several hundred penguins over the last few years. As we know that the virus is still around, SANCCOB continues its disease surveillance programme, funded by the Rupert Nature Foundation and MeerWissen (GIZ). Carcasses found in the wild, especially those with unclear reasons for death on post-mortem, are tested for avian influenza and Newcastle's disease. Samples are stored for later testing for other diseases, in collaboration with the University of Pretoria. SANCCOB works closely with the State Veterinary Services both in the Western and Eastern Cape provinces and test results are communicated to all relevant stakeholders, allowing an improved surveillance and better understanding of the spread of the disease. SANCCOB is also involved in scientific studies around different strains of avian influenza, how it is being transmitted and what effects it has on bird populations.

Carcasses received from the wild are not only tested for diseases but are also assessed in terms of condition, sex and breeding stage. As many birds are found emaciated, it is important to understand the impact of mortality on population dynamics, especially for African penguins. Unfortunately, we are also seeing a large number of penguins being predated, both at sea and on land. During post-mortem evaluations, potential predators can be identified according to bite marks and mode of killing. SANCCOB sends this information to the colony managing authorities which assists them in improving their predator control programmes and prevention measures. SANCCOB's Research Department has developed an expertise in this field which is acknowledged by the government, managing authorities and academia; results are shared with government and at conferences.

# BIOACOUSTIC PROJECTS

SANCCOB has recently started to work with several local and international researchers in the field of bioacoustics. In a collaboration with Nelson Mandela University, BirdLife South Africa and the University of Paris, we try to understand the impacts of underwater noise on African penguins, with a special focus on Algoa Bay where an increase of shipping traffic may be one of the leading causes for the decline of African penguins at St Croix Island.

A study led by the University of Turin, Italy, investigated the development of begging calls in African penguins at SANCCOB Cape Town's Chick Rearing Unit in 2022 and 2023. The researchers found that begging calls can be linked to the size and age of chicks and further studies will test if this method can be used to assess chick ages and chick condition in wild colonies, which could reduce disturbance caused by monitoring activities and would provide valuable information for chick rescues. When conducting work at SANCCOB, the researchers also found that they can detect respiratory infections using bioacoustic analyses of calls which will hopefully be used in the future to improve detection of sick chicks and improve treatment and rehabilitation success. In a planned study, we will investigate the feasibility of identifying sick chicks in the wild by analysing their calls.

At the Stony Point colony, researchers from the University of Turin (Italy) and the University of St Etienne (France) have been studying the calls of breeding adult penguins assessing how they react to neighbouring and unfamiliar penguins and to evaluate if the calls give an indication of the condition of birds. Results showed that the calls can be used to identify times when most birds leave the colony or return from sea; they can be linked to the number of breeding pairs and possibly the body size and condition of birds. Thus, recordings of African penguins calling in a breeding colony can be used to monitor the population without any disturbance. Furthermore, we are developing census methods based on calls, especially as individual birds can be identified by their call. To test if the call also gives an indication of the lung capacity and the capability to dive and forage successfully, the bioacoustic team is collaborating with BirdLife South Africa and SANCCOB to link dive data obtained during tracking studies to calls recorded in the colony. The field of bioacoustics is one that we plan to develop further to improve monitoring practices of African penguins in the wild, whilst reducing disturbance that might be caused by traditional monitoring techniques.







## CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS ON AFRICAN PENGUINS AND OTHER SEABIRDS

In an ongoing study in collaboration with SANParks and City of Cape Town, we are assessing the effects of extreme weather events on African penguins in Simon's Town. Temperature sensors have been placed into a variety of habitats and breeding sites, from open spaces, different types of vegetation to various types of artificial nest boxes. The breeding success of penguins in these areas and nest types is being monitored weekly by our Penguin and Seabird Rangers. Extreme heat events as well as extreme rain and cold has led to mass egg and chick abandonments in recent years and several hundreds of eggs and chicks have been rescued in the colonies and reared by SANCCOB. To mitigate the impact of extreme weather events, which are predicted to occur more regularly with ongoing climate change, we are working with the managing

authorities on improving the habitat for breeding African penguins but also an early warning system that will allow all partners to proactively plan to respond to abandonments more swiftly and effectively.

Initial results of the study were presented at the Southern African Marine Science Symposium (SAMSS) in Durban in June 2022 and a publication is underway on extreme rain events that occurred in 2023, highlighting their effects on the endangered African penguin in collaboration with the South African Weather Service, Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, SANParks and CapeNature.

# PUBLICATIONS

Roberts LC, Molini U, Coetzee LM, Khaïseb S, Roux J-P, Kemper J, **Roberts DG, Ludynia K**, Doherr M, Abernethy D, Franzo G (2023) Is penguin Circovirus circulating only in the Antarctic circle? Lack of viral detection in Namibia. *Animal* <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/13/9/1449>

Froehlich F, Worsfeld RD, Forbes N, **Ludynia K, Parsons NJ**, Carrasco DC, Dutton T (2023) The effects of critical care nutrition on weight gain in African Penguin (*Spheniscus demersus*) chicks. *Journal of Avian Medicine and Surgery*.

Vanstreels RET, Fernandes Chagas CR, Valkiūnas G, dos Anjos CC, **Parsons NJ, Roberts DG, Snyman A**, Hurtado R, Kirchgatter K, Ludynia K, Pistorius PA (2023) *Haemoproteus jenniae* (*Haemoproteidae*, *Haemosporida*) infects gulls (*Larus* spp.) in South Africa, with redescription of *Haemoproteus skuae*. *Parasitology* <https://doi.org/10.1017/S003118202300029X>

Vanstreels RET, **Parsons NJ**, Sherley RB, **Stander N, Strauss V**, Kemper J, **Waller LJ**, Barham BJ, **Ludynia K** (2023) Factors determining the number of seabirds impacted by oil spills and the success of their rehabilitation: lessons learned from Namibia and South Africa. *Marine Pollution Bulletin* <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpolbul.2023.114708>

Roberts LC, Abolnik C, **Waller LJ**, Shaw K, **Ludynia K, Roberts DG**, Kock AA, Makhado AB, **Snyman A**, Abernethy DA (2023) Descriptive epidemiology and management of highly pathogenic avian influenza (H5N8) epidemic in South African coastal birds, 2018. *Transboundary and Emerging Diseases* <https://doi.org/10.1155/2023/2708458>

Phillips J, **Ludynia K, Waller LJ**, Barham PJ, **Mdluli A, Klusener R**, Maneveldt GW (2023) Initial evaluation of the care and rehabilitation success of Cape Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax capensis*) rescued from Robben and Jutten islands, South Africa, in January 2021. *Ostrich* <https://doi.org/10.2989/00306525.2023.2173327>

Pretorius C & **Ludynia K** (2022) Cape Cormorant – View from the Cape: a species on the brink of extinction. In: MT Sethusa, DL Dalton & C Pretorius (eds), *South African animals at risk of extinction*. South African National Biodiversity Institute, Pretoria.

Pretorius C & **Ludynia K** (2022) Bank Cormorant – On the banks of danger. In: MT Sethusa, DL Dalton & C Pretorius (eds), *South African animals at risk of extinction*. South African National Biodiversity Institute, Pretoria.

**Ludynia K** (2022) African Penguin – Diving into conservation efforts to save the African Penguin. In: MT Sethusa, DL Dalton & C Pretorius (eds), *South African animals at risk of extinction*. South African National Biodiversity Institute, Pretoria.

**Ludynia K** (2022) Urban legends – Protecting penguins in a small coastal town. *BirdLife Magazine* November/December 2022.



# AFRICAN PENGUIN & SEABIRD RANGER PROGRAMME



For the period in review, the African Penguin and Seabird Ranger Programme supports eight rangers at four key seabird colonies along the South African coastline; Robben Island, Simon's Town and Stony Point, all located in the Western Cape, as well as Bird Island in the Eastern Cape. Two additional rangers will be deployed after the reporting period; one on Dassen Island located on the West Coast of South Africa, and another to the Simon's Town colony. This means that SANCCOB will have 10 Penguin and Seabird Rangers monitoring seabirds in the wild. The rangers are trained in monitoring, scientific data collection, rescue of debilitated seabirds, and providing direct support to the conservation authorities. Each colony presents different challenges, dependent on island or mainland; the rangers work with CapeNature, City of Cape Town, Robben Island Museum and SANParks, as guardians of African penguins and other vulnerable seabirds. Land-based colonies experience unique challenges that are absent in most island colonies. 55 predation cases were recorded on African penguins caused by domestic dogs and 27 penguins were killed due to vehicle collisions, making human-wildlife conflict a major concern that is contributing to the numerous threats facing African penguins.



# BIRD ISLAND, ADDO ELEPHANT NATIONAL PARK MPA

In collaboration with SANParks, two rangers are deployed to Bird Island in Algoa Bay, Caitlin van der Merwe joined fellow ranger, Zamokuhle Lazola, as an African penguin and Seabird Ranger in January 2023, and together, they perform critical monitoring of the island's seabirds. Bird Island seabirds face numerous threats; predation from shark attacks, extreme weather events, oil pollution due to ship-to-ship bunkering permitted in the Bay, vessel traffic, and associated underwater noise pollution. Bird Island is extremely special as it holds the largest Cape gannet colony in the world, with approximately 102,000 breeding pairs calling Bird Island their home. African penguin populations were recorded at approximately 1,400 breeding pairs. St Croix Island lies closest to the mainland, and holds an important population of African penguins that was previously the largest colony in the world but has now suffered a dramatic decline with fewer than 1,000 breeding pairs (DFFE unpublished, 2023). St Croix is not manned by rangers due to the risk of disturbance to the remaining penguin population; however, the colony is monitored by SANParks.

Due to its location, some 40km from Gqeberha's port, reaching Bird Island can be a challenge, especially during poor weather spells and high sea swells. During these

times, the rangers often perform miracles, stabilising and caring for patients, either suffering from severe trauma wounds, or very young penguin chicks. WhatsApp messages and calls are used to guide the rangers on specialised treatment protocols until the birds can be safely transported to the Gqeberha seabird hospital.

Bird Island has faced severe weather where nests flood, and chicks need to be removed from the nests, however they are not always transferred to SANCCOB. During a period of heavy rain in March 2022, 13 chicks were rescued, all of which were very cold and shivering. Once the chicks had received essential stabilisation of warmth and fluids, most of them were returned to their nests and reunited with their parents. The rangers monitor nests closely, especially before intervening and will only do so when it is clear that chicks have been abandoned, or they require medical attention.

The rangers work closely with SANParks and researchers when collecting data which is used to inform management decisions. Different nest types are monitored to inform preferred habitat selection by the birds, penguin moult counts are performed, and observations are recorded on environmental conditions affecting seabirds.



# STONY POINT

Located in the quaint coastal town of Betty's Bay in the Overberg, the Stony Point Nature Reserve is home to a colony of African penguins. Stony Point offers the public the chance to see these wonderful flightless birds up close, which allows the public to observe the penguins go about their daily activities in their natural habitat. The colony lies on the site of the old Waaygat Whaling Station, which was used to harvest and process whale meat in the early to mid-1900s. Remnants of the machinery and infrastructure for this long-defunct industry can still be found at the site.

African penguin and Seabird Ranger, Gavin Petersen, has monitored the Stony Point colony since 2019, and has been instrumental as it faces at-sea and land-based threats. African penguins and other seabirds face at-sea predation from Cape fur seals. On land, predators include mongoose, caracal, and Cape leopard. Human wildlife conflict occurs when penguins abscond from the colony and nest in residential gardens and surrounds. SANCCOB's ranger liaises with residents informing them to report penguin offenders who will be relocated safely back inside the confines of the colony. Mainland colonies are challenged as wandering penguins are at risk of vehicle collisions and domestic

animal attacks, and during the reporting period, six penguins were killed by vehicles near the Stony Point colony. SANCCOB and CapeNature are working on mitigating these losses through improved awareness and communication in Betty's Bay.

This colony does not experience the level of human visitors as the Simon's Town colonies; however, during summer months, the colony is busy with tourists, and this requires management. From October onwards, many of Stony Point's penguins abandon their chicks to undergo their annual feather moult. SANCCOB's ranger works long days ensuring the colony is monitored closely, identifying unaccompanied chicks, and coordinating transport between the colony and SANCCOB, which can sometimes occur every day of the week!

Habitat degradation and severe winter storms result in nest flooding and chick abandonment. Gavin works closely with his CapeNature colleagues where he is directly involved with data collection and observations of colony dynamics. His presence at Stony Point provides tremendous value, where his expertise is utilised by seabird ecologists and researchers who require specific data and colony knowledge.

*Our Stony Point ranger, Gavin, leads a rescue crew at the colony.*







## SIMON'S TOWN

Simon's Town is located on the shores of False Bay, nestled within Table Mountain National Park Marine Protected Area; the Simon's Town penguin colony consists of Boulders Beach, managed by the South African National Parks (SANParks) and the surrounding colony of African penguins located on the outskirts of the national park, which is managed by the City of Cape Town. SANCCOB's Penguin and Seabird Rangers continue to play a crucial role in seabird conservation efforts alongside our partners, the City of Cape Town and SANParks.

Currently, the Penguin and Seabird Rangers are supervised by Mashudu Mashau who is employed by City of Cape Town, while Mikaela Slier, Vardaman Hahndiek, and Kashiefa Amos are the Penguin and Seabird Rangers on-site. The fourth ranger, Mpumelelo Mabutyana has taken up a

position with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) on Marion Island where he will be spend 13 months conducting seabird research.

This mainland colony experiences several challenges, both for the seabirds that inhabit the area, and for their ranger guardians. Land predators pose just as much of a threat as marine predators; caracal, mongoose, Cape clawless otter, genet and domestic dogs were recorded to attack penguins. The City of Cape Town's Coastal Management Branch utilises camera traps to monitor the presence of caracals frequenting the colony. On Friday 28 October 2022, 17 African penguins were attacked and killed by unaccompanied dogs. The incident shocked and saddened all those who work tirelessly to conserve these endangered birds, that are currently



declining at an alarming rate with populations the lowest on record. The Penguin and Seabird Rangers transported the penguin carcasses to SANCCOB as part of an incident investigation. SANCCOB has extensive experience in post-mortem examinations and in the identification of predators of African penguins based on necropsy results and characteristics of land-based predator bite marks and wounds inflicted on penguins. SANCCOB's Clinical Veterinarian described the severe bite marks and puncture wounds to the lower parts of the penguins' bodies, whilst several penguins suffered extensive wounds to the neck, abdomen, and groin areas.

Although set amid a residential area, it is one of the few sites where African penguins can be observed at close range, though this comes with human-related issues. Where human and animal habitats overlap, co-existence is possible, but requires a cohesive approach that is sustainable for

humans and wildlife to co-adapt and share landscapes. The Simon's Town rangers are frequently confronted with non-compliant dog walkers; dogs off leash pose a high risk to endangered African penguins and other seabirds as demonstrated during the 2022 incident mentioned above. Every year, over 60,000 visitors flock to Boulders to see, photograph and watch the African penguins amongst the indigenous bush and the clear waters of False Bay, partially enclosed by granite boulders that are 540 million years old. The high visitor traffic pressure on the Simons Town area, especially during the summer months, includes large numbers of tour buses and coaches. Rangers must monitor the boardwalks closely and ensure visitors to the colony comply with staying on the boardwalk or approved viewing areas, as non-adherence to this is a fineable cause.

*Rangers training in Simon's Town.*





# ROBBEN ISLAND

Nicholas Ngcathu continues to fulfil the role of African penguin and Seabird Ranger on Robben Island. Nicholas lives and works on the island full-time carrying out a broad set of responsibilities, including important seabird monitoring and assisting Robben Island's Environmental Unit. Robben Island is a well-known tourism destination as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the former prison of Nelson Mandela; therefore, the island must be managed around heritage, tourism, and the environment.

From March to September each year, the EarthWatch Institute conducts monitoring of African penguins, which serves as the longest-standing data monitoring of African penguins' breeding success which started after the MV Treasure oil spill in 2000 to

evaluate how oiled and rehabilitated birds fare in the wild. SANCCOB's ranger plays a key role teaching the EarthWatch volunteers how to monitor penguin nests, assess chick body condition and stabilise injured birds.

During the first week of June 2022, an annual seabird count was conducted by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), supported, and assisted by Robben Island Environmental Unit and SANCCOB's Penguin and Seabird Ranger. Robben Island is divided into areas initially created to compare breeding output from various vegetation types and for easy counting. A total of 991 breeding pairs of African penguins were recorded, as well as 38 endangered Bank cormorant nests and 342 Swift tern nests.



A big storm affected Robben Island during June 2022 when strong winds and heavy rains hit the island from the northwest. The weather forecast estimated that over 20mm of rain would fall and that winds were going to reach 40 knots. To assess the impact of the storm on breeding African penguins, three surveys in the main section of the colony were conducted over two days. Unfortunately, 11 newly hatched chicks were found that had likely been abandoned. Any surviving chicks were rescued, as well as 19 eggs were marked as abandoned and transferred to SANCCOB. The flooding of nests on Robben Island is extremely unusual with only five other recorded instances of nests flooding in the last 15 years.

As with the mainland colonies, road kills are an ongoing concern on Robben Island. During the reporting period, two African penguins were killed by motor vehicles. To address this, the Robben Island Infrastructure Department installed cameras to help identify non-compliance with road rules on the island. Nicholas frequently addresses this issue with island residents and visitors, reinforcing the need to adhere to speed limits.


Marine debris poses direct threats to all marine life but in the case of Robben Island, plastic waste has been discovered in the stomachs of deceased fallow deer. Whilst clean-ups occur throughout the year, there were two coordinated coastal clean-up events in 2022. In June, a group of 20 people from several organisations including SANCCOB, Cape Kayak Adventure and Two Oceans Aquarium participated in a cleanup. The second event was held on the 17 September 2022 to mark International Coastal Cleanup Day. Various organisations

participated including CapeNature, Coca Cola Peninsula Beverages, Two Oceans Aquarium, Beach Co-Op and SANCCOB. The target was to fill up at least 500 bags of debris, however; the hard work and commitment of the participants far exceeded this target.

Robben Island's Environmental Unit planned a controlled burn of cleared alien vegetation in October 2022. Unfortunately, the piles of vegetation provided shelter for penguins and had become a popular breeding site. The biggest concern linked to the burn was the potential impact on wildlife species, and whilst steps were taken to remove penguins from the area, there were other species, such as tortoises and mole snakes that inhabit the area; these are not so easy to find under the piles of vegetation. The number of penguin nests in the area was concerning; however, the risk of fire requires careful consideration. Fuel reduction is one of the management tools required as a mitigation measure, however, a key factor is to ensure that this can happen without posing a threat to endangered African penguins and other wildlife. Robben Island Museum sought assistance from the City of Cape Town's Fire and Rescue Department, CapeNature and City of Cape Town's Biodiversity Branch. The African penguin and Seabird Ranger worked tirelessly to ensure there were no penguins or other wildlife species hidden under the vegetation stockpiles. The area was fenced off to prevent the penguins from returning once their chicks had fledged however several penguins were already nesting under the vegetation resulting in penguin chicks being cleared from the area and transferred to SANCCOB.



# PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE



In 2022 seabirds were affected by an oil spill, a disease outbreak and chick abandonment driven by food scarcity and extreme weather events. As seabird numbers continue to decline and the threats facing them intensify, a concerning picture is emerging. In South Africa, responses to wildlife incidents are too often reactive instead of proactive; SANCCOB recognises that proactive planning and preparation is essential to a successful response. To do this, we work with several stakeholders, including government, industry, NGOs, and other organisations to adequately plan and prepare response strategies that aim to prevent, or mitigate the impacts of future disasters.





## OILED WILDLIFE RESPONSE

SANCCOB has responded to every major oil spill affecting seabirds along the South African coast, as well as a spill off Lüderitz, Namibia; and our experiences have taught us that we need to be alert and prepared. Our collaborative work with management

authorities and industry continues as we advocate and promote for oiled wildlife response to be fully integrated into the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan as well as industry-specific plans.

## MAINTAINING PREPAREDNESS

Volunteers are the lifeline of our organisation; they are the ones we lean on when we need them the most. Maintaining a core group of response volunteers is key to effective preparedness and our wildlife responders continued to build on the training of previous years and test their response capabilities through desktop and in-person deployment exercises. To better equip volunteers, 20 people attended Disaster Response Training Workshops, held in May and October 2022. SANCCOB maintains a constant state of readiness ensuring that its responders can deploy locally or internationally within 24 hours. In 2022, SANCCOB's primary oiled wildlife responders underwent Incident Command System (ICS) 300 and Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) training. ICS 300 is for individuals that require advanced knowledge and training

on the application of the Incident Command System, whilst the HAZWOPER certification is a prerequisite for responding to oil spills internationally.

As part of SANCCOB's organisational preparedness, an internal deployment exercise was held on 31 August 2022. The exercise commenced with a simulated call to SANCCOB reporting an oil spill near the Stony Point penguin colony in Betty's Bay. SANCCOB's initial response protocol was activated, and notification communications went out via internal channels. The initial briefing meeting identified key objectives and the IMS structure for SANCCOB was established. The exercise was well executed and highlighted additional training needs and role-specific training that will take place in the near future.





## OPERATION “BANK CORMORANT”... HOW READY ARE WE, SOUTH AFRICA?

Eight staff from SANCCOB’s Conservation Department participated in a two-day, full-scale National Joint Government-Industry Deployment exercise dubbed “Bank Cormorant” held from 12-13 May 2023. ICS training and the deployment exercise was funded by the Benguela Current Commission and was organised by the South African Incident Management Organisation (IMOrg) aimed to test South Africa’s response capabilities to a marine oil spill incident from a vessel at sea. The IMOrg falls under the Department of Transport and is responsible for co-ordinating preparedness and response activities to hazards in the marine environment, particularly oil spills. The exercise involved many members of the IMOrg, including various government departments both

nationally and regionally, in addition to several industry organisations and NGOs. SANCCOB has been a member of the IMOrg for many years due to our role as the mandated seabird response organisation in the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan.

The exercise simulated a fictional scenario between a container ship and a tanker which collided, spilling crude oil in Table Bay. Early oil spill models predicted the oil to impact Robben Island and the shoreline between Sunset Beach and Blouberg. The SANCCOB team spent the first day in the incident management centre assisting in the development of the wildlife section of the incident action plan for the next operational period. On the second day, a team from SANCCOB was deployed by helicopter

to Robben Island to perform a field assessment on foot and by boat, focusing on three key areas. The team consisted of a Field Assessment Lead, an Oiled Wildlife Response Specialist, a Veterinarian, a Capture Specialist, and an Artificial Rearing Specialist. Sightings of oiled birds were recorded, and the team donned their personal protective equipment to simulate the capture of affected birds with logistical support from the Robben Island Environmental Unit. Simultaneously, a team of SANCCOB disaster response volunteers was deployed to Blouberg Beach to perform a shoreline survey searching for oil-affected birds. The final phase of the exercise was

to simulate seabird transportation back to the mainland using a vessel. Poor weather conditions, which are not uncommon for the area during winter with >4 metre swells resulted in the vessel aborting and returning to Murray's Bay Harbour. A helicopter was deployed to collect the wildlife team and return them to solid ground. The exercise was a great opportunity for SANCCOB to demonstrate an oiled wildlife response, with all its complexities, including the challenge of poor weather. This exercise tested many aspects of a response and highlighted the importance of stakeholder collaboration and engagement in oil spill response.

## AZA SAFE DISASTER RELIEF FUND CONTINUES TO SUPPORT SOUTH AFRICA'S WILDLIFE PREPAREDNESS

As part of the American Association for Zoo and Aquarium's (AZA) Saving Animals From Extinction (SAFE) program, the African penguin was chosen as a signature species in 2015 and a variety of projects were identified to assist with the conservation of this endangered species in southern Africa. Based on the needs laid out in the first Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP) and in line with the new draft BMP, eight SAFE projects were subsequently developed. With the ongoing risk of a serious disaster, one

of the eight SAFE projects was the Disaster Relief Project. This project focuses on five areas, namely:

- 1) To identify and engage with collaborators and stakeholders,
- 2) Support the development of wildlife contingency plans and protocols,
- 3) Facilitate disaster response training,
- 4) Support research and,
- 5) Support the purchase of designated disaster response equipment.





As the mandated seabird response organisation under the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (NOSCP), SANCCOB is the custodian of the AZA SAFE Disaster Relief Fund for African penguins in South Africa. A key focus area of the fund is the purchasing of dedicated in-country disaster response equipment. As such, SANCCOB has focused efforts on procuring oiled wildlife response equipment for South Africa over the past few years, which is stored in two containers located in Cape Town and Gqeberha. The oiled wildlife equipment stockpile in Gqeberha was

prioritised due to the high risk of oil spills resulting from ship-to-ship fuel transfers with the most recent spill occurring in 2022.

Further funding from AZA SAFE enabled SANCCOB to develop basic oiled wildlife response kits for African Penguin and Seabird Rangers at the main seabird island colonies of Dassen, Robben, Bird and Dyer Islands. These kits consist of personal protective, capture, and stabilisation equipment to allow for timeous response to incidents. The kits will be procured and distributed in the second half of 2023.

## FOURTH OIL SPILL CAUSED BY SHIP-TO-SHIP FUEL TRANSFERS IN ALGOA BAY

The collection of coastal islands in Algoa Bay is divided into two groups; the St Croix group comprising of St Croix, Jahleel and Brenton islands; and the Bird Island group, consisting of Bird, Seal and Stag islands, as well as Black Rocks. The Bird Island group forms part of Bird Island Marine Protected Area (MPA), managed by Addo Elephant National Park; however, both groups of islands support globally important populations of endangered African penguins and Cape gannets. St Croix Island lies around 4km from the mainland and sits closest to the ship-to-ship bunkering activities,

located in anchorages just outside the port. St Croix Island previously held the largest population of African penguins in the world but by 2022, had declined by more than 80%. The proximity of this colony is subjected to the ongoing development of the Port of Coega, ship-to-ship (STS) bunkering and the associated increase of vessel traffic contributing to the underwater noise pollution.

On 23 May 2022, an oil spill occurred when a hose transferring fuel between two vessels in Algoa Bay, the Umnenga II and Lefkas ruptured, spilling oil onto the deck

of the Lefkas and into the sea. Fortunately, the majority of the oil ended up contained between the fenders of the two vessels. A local rapid response team was deployed to commence containment and clean-up operations. The first ICS meeting took place that evening as SANCCOB was alerted and prepared for the worst, with the knowledge that another oil spill had the potential to decimate the remaining penguin population in the bay. Aerial, land, and boat-based surveillance took place throughout the week, to identify impacted seabirds (and other wildlife). The primary concern was St Croix Island given its proximity to the site of the spill. Aerial surveillance involved the use of a helicopter, drone, and a fixed-wing aircraft fitted with a specialised oil detection camera.

Land-based surveys were conducted along the shore and on Bird Island; despite the island being some 40km away from the spill site, oiled penguins and seabirds may have made their way back to their natal colony. Unfortunately, a foot patrol was not possible on St Croix Island until the second week of the incident due to poor weather conditions, which would have compromised human safety. SANCCOB Gqeberha was placed on stand-by to receive oiled birds and participated in the incident command structure. On 25 May 2022, Preparedness and Response Manager, Monica Stassen, was deployed to Gqeberha to oversee the wildlife response tactics, however by the 31st May, no oiled seabirds had been observed and SANCCOB deactivated its response.

## HOUT BAY OIL SPILL

Harbour oil spills are common; however, they are generally easier to deal with and tend to have less impact on the marine environment, due to rapid containment and clean up. On the evening of 12 July 2022, SANCCOB was informed of an oil spill in Hout Bay Harbour by the local Hout Bay Seal Rescue (HBSR) who had admitted some oil-affected Cape fur seals. Initial reports indicated that the spilled oil was diesel, however it was later confirmed to be engine oil. HBSR confirmed that two oiled yearling seals were captured and receiving care. SANCCOB received a request for assistance from the Cape of Good Hope SPCA and HBSR as they lacked the necessary equipment to wash the seals. Due to the toxicity of the product, and the need to wash immediately, SANCCOB deployed a primary responder to assist with washing

the seals and confirmed reports that no seabirds were affected. As a precautionary measure, SANCCOB conducted a field assessment on 14 July 2022; however, very few seabirds were observed in the area, and none appeared to be oiled.

Initial suspicions were that an old fishing vessel docked nearby was leaking fuel, however, after further investigation it was determined that the oil came from elsewhere as no leaks were found on the vessel. This incident highlighted a major gap in the NOSCP when it comes to oiled marine mammals and turtles as there is no mandated response organisation. Although several organisations have facilities to house seals, there is a lack of capability to decontaminate affected mammals or turtles.



## OFFSHORE OPERATORS STAKEHOLDERS FORUM

Ship-to-ship bunkering poses several environmental challenges, such as the risk of oil pollution and underwater noise pollution associated with increased vessel traffic. These risks need to receive adequate consideration in the decision-making process regarding bunkering operations to ensure that development is ecologically sustainable. Since the start of STS bunkering in Algoa Bay, four bunkering related oil spills have occurred, affecting three of the four endangered seabird species in Algoa Bay. SANCCOB and other environmental organisations have objected to ship-to-ship bunkering since its inception and continue to raise their concerns that this high-risk commercial business is permitted near important foraging and breeding grounds of endangered species.

Much of 2022 was focused on the launching of the long-awaited Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA). After many months of delays the tender was finally published in July 2022 with a submission date of end-September. SANCCOB, along with the Nelson Mandela University was invited to tender for the ERA with SA Maritime Consultancy whereby SANCCOB's role would be the oiled wildlife response component.

It was eventually confirmed in January 2023 that the tender had been awarded to PRDW Consulting Port and Coastal Engineers. The consultants were officially introduced to the Offshore Environmental Working Group and in Offshore Operators Forum in March 2023 and the project is anticipated to be completed by September 2023. SANCCOB has been listed in the Terms of Reference as a key stakeholder for the consultants to engage with.

The Biodiversity Law Centre (BLC) is assisting SANCCOB and BirdLife South Africa with pro bono legal services to tackle the threats facing African penguins. The BLC submitted a letter to the Minister of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment requesting that fuel bunkering be listed in the EIA regulations as a "regulated activity". This would make an EIA a compulsory activity prior to the commencement of any ship-to-ship bunkering operations and would involve a far more rigorous process.



## FIRST RESPONDER AND OILED WILDLIFE TRAINING

SANCCOB hosted five staff members from the marine mining sector, Debmarine Namibia, three officials from the Namibian Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR) and two staff members from Namdeb Diamond Corporation to participate in First Response and Oiled Wildlife Response training. The training took place over five days and covered a variety of topics such as transportation, handling, stabilisation, fluid therapy, nutrition, as well as oiled wildlife response and the process of decontaminating oiled seabirds. The training is part of the ongoing work to improve Tier 1 and 2 preparedness, mainly funded by the Debmarine-Namdeb Foundation.

In the first quarter of 2022, SANCCOB hosted and provided training to officials from the Department of Forestry, Fisheries

and the Environment (DFFE), SANParks, Cape Nature, City of Cape Town, Robben Island Museum and the Cape of Good Hope SPCA, as part of a Benguela Current Convention (BCC) tender contract that SANCCOB was awarded to deliver First Responder and Oiled Wildlife Response training. The training lasted one week, and the Two Oceans Aquarium hosted the participants for one day sharing oiled wildlife response techniques for turtles and marine mammals. The remainder of the week focused on various aspects of an oiled wildlife response involving seabirds using a combination of theoretical and practical sessions. Topics covered in transportation, handling, stabilisation, fluid therapy, and how to wash affected birds.

## ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

Several oil and gas exploration projects along the South African coastline commenced with Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIA). SANCCOB submitted comments on both the scoping report and ESIA for the proposed drilling by Total Energies in Block 5/6/7, located off the southwest coast of Africa. SANCCOB also submitted comments on the scoping report for the proposed drilling in Block Deep Water Orange Basin, another Total Energy project.

In August, the Turkish-owned Karpowership engaged SANCCOB for an in-person meeting. Karpowership had previously been denied environmental authorisation by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) to install a fleet of floating power plants in Algoa Bay, Saldanha Bay and Richard Bay, to generate power from floating gas ships. Karpowership had been granted an opportunity to address the concern raised by DFFE in the first EIA, namely inadequate stakeholder consultation,



the lack of a noise pollution study and the consideration of cumulative impacts. SANCCOB engaged with Karpowership and participated in the formal EIA process by submitting detailed comments for each of the proposed locations. To date, Karpowership has been unsuccessful in obtaining environmental authorisation

for any of the proposed locations due to procedural inadequacies and not for environmental reasons. SANCCOB strongly opposes the installation of the powership in Algoa Bay due to the concerns around the declining African penguin population numbers in the bay.

## CONSULTANCY OPPORTUNITIES

As the only oiled wildlife seabird facility in Africa, SANCCOB is uniquely positioned to provide consultancy services, and several exciting opportunities were presented during 2022-2023. We participated in a technical forum for all Oil Spill Response Limited (OSRL) members based in Angola. SANCCOB, along with the Sea Alarm Foundation and OSRL's wildlife division prepared an interactive breakaway session on wildlife preparedness. Sea Alarm presented a brief history of wildlife preparedness activities in Angola, and SANCCOB presented a case study example of how industry can support wildlife preparedness activities.

Towards the end of 2022, we were awarded a consultancy opportunity with Shell Mauritania. Shell was planning to perform exploratory drilling just off the coast of Mauritania in 2023. SANCCOB was requested to conduct an assessment on the feasibility of a wildlife response in the event of an oil pollution incident. SANCCOB submitted a detailed proposal recommending a phased approach, including a desk top study, and a site

visit to Mauritania culminating in a wildlife feasibility assessment report. The proposal was accepted, and work commenced in February 2023 with the site visit to Nouakchott planned for the beginning of May 2023.

2023 started off on a positive note when the Global Initiative for West, Central and Southern Africa (GI WACAF) invited SANCCOB to participate in a consultancy opportunity in Nigeria. The Nigerian Government requested assistance in drafting a National Oiled Wildlife Preparedness and Response Contingency Plan. This is an incredible opportunity as Nigeria has experienced several oil spills, and this is a positive step in recognising the need to improve oiled wildlife preparedness and response.





# GLOBAL OILED WILDLIFE RESPONSE SYSTEMS (GOWRS) & OIL CONFERENCES



Attending international conferences is an effective way to network, disseminate the important work that SANCCOB does, and influence best practice. In June 2022, SANCCOB attended the Interspill Conference in Amsterdam, which provided a face-to-face forum to discuss issues and showcase innovative solutions to improve global readiness and demonstrate why spill preparedness remains highly relevant. The concept of Interspill was launched over 20 years ago and was designed to address the changes taking place in the world of marine spills at that time. Innovation and

development in shipping has seen a significant reduction in the number of spills, however, they still occur. Any harm caused by pollution must be prevented and, if this is not possible, must be cleaned up quickly and thoroughly be it at sea or on land. The conference is largely focused on industry; however wildlife organisations must use these platforms as a reminder to industry that wildlife preparedness is essential for any successful oil spill response.

The highlight of the week was the official launch of GOWRS, which was marked by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Oil Spill Response Limited (OSRL) CEO, Rob James, and the GOWRS Chair, Mike Ziccardi. The MoU reflects that the 10 GOWRS wildlife organisations are “active” and available to provide wildlife assessment services for OSRL members. A roster system has been implemented to ensure that primary and secondary responder organisations are available to deploy in the event of an oil pollution incident affecting wildlife.

Due to the impact of Covid, the first in-person GOWRS meeting since 2019 was held in 2022 in San Pedro, California, and was a welcome change from the online Steering Committee



meetings. These in-person meetings ensure that the 10-member response organisations connect and spend the week dedicated to developing the annual work plan. The focus on the week's discussions were on building capacity in the form of a Coordinator role, to manage deliverables and serve as the primary liaison between OSRL and GOWRS. A job description was drafted with the aim to advertise and recruit at the end of 2023. Being one of 10 oiled wildlife organisations in the world comes with a high degree of responsibility; SANCCOB must ensure that we fulfil our mandate to respond to oil pollution incidents affecting seabirds along the South African coastline. The GOWRS commitment also requires that we are ready to deploy an Assessment Team 24/7/365, therefore the SANCCOB emergency response team undergoes regular training to ensure skills are maintained.

Immediately after the GOWRS meeting, Nicky Stander, SANCCOB's Head of Conservation, remained in California and attended the 14th Effects of Oil on Wildlife (EoW) Conference held in Long Beach. Held every three years, this conference was well attended by more than 160 individuals from 13 countries, representing 60 wildlife organisations, state agencies, universities and oil industry groups. SANCCOB's presentations included the development of establishing NAMCOB, and on cumulative impacts on African penguins in Algoa Bay,

which, of course, included ship-to-ship fuel bunkering. SANCCOB joined forces with several other GOWRS partners to participate in a roundtable discussion on avian diseases. Nicky further went on to present on the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) virus affecting several seabird species in South Africa (and globally), including how SANCCOB responded to the virus and the lessons learned. This topic generated a lot of discussion as avian influenza continued to spread across Africa, Europe and the Americas; wildlife organisations were keen to understand what preparedness measures to implement at their respective facilities. The week ended with SANCCOB and fellow GOWRS partners collaborating with the founders of Wildlife Rehabilitators Medical Database (WRMD) participating in a group panel on the importance of data collection during an oil spill. SANCCOB utilises the WRMD system for daily operations; this database enabled us to transition from our outdated paper patient card system. In recognition of the importance of capturing critical information during an oil spill, that can potentially be used to prosecute the responsible party (RP), the founders of WRMD have developed O-WRMD, specifically designed for oil-affected patients. The panel discussed and advised the audience on effective record keeping during a spill, building appropriate capacity to do so and utilising database services such as WRMD.

*GOWRS Chair Mike Ziccardi and OSRL CEO Rob James, signing MoU at the Interspill conference.*



*GOWRS group at the Interspill conference.*





# ADVOCACY



## 12-YEAR EXPERIMENT REVEALS FISHING PRESSURE THREATENS THE SURVIVAL OF AFRICAN PENGUINS

Resource competition with industrial fisheries and the extremely low abundance of sardine, especially on the West Coast of South Africa, has been identified as the main reason for the decline of the African penguin population. In 2008, the then Department of Environmental Affairs implemented an island closure experiment, alternating opening and closing four of the largest African penguin breeding colonies – Dassen, Robben, St Croix and Bird islands – to the pelagic fishing industry in a radius of 20km. SANCCOB has been involved in the monitoring of biological parameters for penguins, such as foraging (distances

travelled, time spent at sea), breeding success, and chick survival, during, and following, the experiment. Results of the experiment have shown a positive effect of closing fishing for small pelagic fish on African penguin population parameters; however, the potential of socio-economic losses have been raised by the industry and biological results have been contested. SANCCOB serves on several task teams to assist government with decision-making on fisheries closures and seabird conservation. With our conservation partners, BirdLife South Africa, WWF South Africa and the Endangered Wildlife Trust, a 'Conservation

Coalition' has been established, designed to actively engage with the Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, other government agencies and the fishing sector, with a unified voice. The coalition provides scientific data and recommendations further informing the authorities of the plight of the African penguin and the imminent risk of extinction of this species.

After a long and protracted process, in September 2022, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment announced that commercial sardine and anchovy fishing will be temporarily closed around six penguin colonies from 1 September 2022 until 23 January 2023. During this time, the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment appointed an international panel of experts to make recommendations on the value of restricted fishing and the potential benefits to penguins, as well as the potential impact these restrictions may have on the fishing industry.

The conservation coalition has consistently advocated for year-round closures. African penguins have an extended breeding season with many colonies supporting

nesting birds for more than six months of the year. Research has demonstrated that even outside of the core breeding period (late summer and winter), African penguins forage in the waters around their colonies to fatten up, before, and after, the crucial moult period, which increases the potential of seabird fisheries competition for resources outside of the breeding season.

There are many threats to the African penguin and SANCCOB's work is actively tackling many of them, from disease surveillance to oiled wildlife preparedness, penguin rangers and hand-rearing of abandoned chicks but unfortunately, all these measures can only be successful if there is enough food for penguins in the wild. Fisheries closures are one way of increasing food availability, especially for breeding African penguins, but a recovery of the sardine stock is needed, not only for penguins and other seabirds but also for a healthy ecosystem and sustainable fisheries. SANCCOB has recently joined the Responsible Fisheries Alliance (RAF), a group of conservation NGOs and fisheries, to address some of these issues and to work together on a healthy ecosystem with benefits for seabirds and people.





# LEGAL

SANCCOB and BirdLife South Africa have been working with the Biodiversity Law Centre (BLC) to explore the legal options available to further protect seabirds. The two main issues are the lack of food due to competition with commercial fisheries and ship-to-ship bunkering. The Biodiversity Law Centre has been advising both NGOs pro bono based on the belief of change through law. The BLC are activist lawyers who seek to use the law to protect and restore ecosystems in Southern Africa. By partnering with communities and other civil society organisations, they provide legal advice and support in order to achieve their vision of flourishing indigenous species and ecosystems that support sustainable livelihoods in Southern Africa.

In 2022 and 2023, there were several engagements between the BLC, acting on behalf of the two NGOs, and the Minister of Environment. The BLC addressed Minister Creecy conveying our ongoing concerns relating to ship-to-ship fuel transfers and requesting that these activities are included as a listed activity under the EIA Regulations, 2014. The Minister's correspondence advised that her Department were investigating whether including bunkering as a listed

activity in the EIA Regulations, 2014, would be an appropriate tool to mitigate the negative effect bunkering may have on the environment, and specifically on African penguin colonies. And, considering whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) would be an appropriate tool for site selection for current and future STS bunkering, coupled with norms and standards.

The BLC followed up with the Minister after it had been confirmed that in 2023 there were only 783 breeding pairs of African Penguins left on St Croix Island. This means that there had been a 38% decrease since 2022 when 1,262 pairs were recorded, and a 90% decrease in the St Croix population since before bunkering activities commenced in Algoa Bay in 2015. The colony is therefore likely to be the 7th largest population in South Africa, compared to 2015 when the St Croix colony was the largest globally, with 39% of the South African population. The BLC further highlighted that, critically, the St Croix colony has now decreased to below the threshold of 1,000 breeding pairs which has taken this colony to a significantly higher extinction risk category, according to work presented by the Oceans and Coasts Department of the Department of Environmental Affairs in 2021.

## NEW AND EMERGING THREATS: UNDERWATER NOISE POLLUTION

Several studies have shown that African penguin communication is important for their survival, both on land and at sea. Unfortunately, anthropogenic noise, such

as ship traffic, can negatively affect the foraging behaviour of penguins, and thus their long-term survival. The dramatic decline of African penguins and the

increase of industrial developments in Algoa Bay resulted in us taking a closer look into vessel-related impacts. SANCCOB co-authored a research paper titled 'Maritime traffic trends around the southern tip of Africa – Did marine noise pollution contribute to the local penguins' collapse?' We hypothesised that underwater noise levels would intensify after the initiation of ship-to-ship bunkering operations, with a noticeable negative impact on penguin numbers. This study was the first to explore the impact of maritime traffic noise pollution on a seabird species, and

the consequence of offshore bunkering activities on underwater noise levels. The intensification of underwater noise levels in the African Penguin's foraging habitat was linked to the initiation and expansion of ship-to-ship bunkering activities which intensified the maritime traffic in the area. Results showed that noise levels were significantly related to the collapse of what had been the world's largest remaining colony of endangered African penguins and the underwater soundscape of Algoa Bay, a hotspot of biodiversity, has now been profoundly modified.

## PRINCE EDWARD ISLANDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Prince Edward Islands are two small uninhabited islands in the sub-Antarctic Indian Ocean that are part of South Africa, named Marion Island and Prince Edward Island. The islands have been declared Special Nature Reserves under the South African Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, No. 57 of 2003, and activities on the islands are therefore restricted to research and conservation management. Further protection was granted when the area was declared a marine protected area in 2013. The only human inhabitants of the islands are the staff of a meteorological and biological research station run by the South African National Antarctic Programme on Marion Island.

SANCCOB serves on the Prince Edward Islands Advisory Committee, led by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment. One of the key

functions has been to review the Mouse Free Marion Island work plan, including the environment effects. This important project is a partnership between the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) and BirdLife South Africa (BLSA). The Mouse-Free Marion (MFM) Project is an initiative working towards the eradication of invasive House Mice from Marion Island, one of two islands forming the South African Prince Edward Islands group. Adverse impacts of invasive mice on the vegetation, invertebrates and more recently seabirds, are significant, increasing in severity, and are incompatible with the Special Nature Reserve status of the island. The baiting programme is planned for 2025, however there is a great deal of planning, including services and supplies that need to be choreographed and synchronised to ensure a successful outcome.



# GOVERNMENT LIAISON



## PARTNERSHIPS WITH CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES

SANCCOB holds partnership agreements in the form of Memorandum of Understandings with CapeNature, City of Cape Town and Robben Island Museum, and an agreement is underway with SANParks. These agreements outline various joint collaborations focusing on seabird conservation actions. Our partnership with CapeNature was strengthened even further in 2023 through the deployment of an

African Penguin and Seabird Ranger on Dassen Island. Other joint collaborations include the rescue and transportation of injured or compromised seabirds to SANCCOB, preparedness measures relating to pollution, disease outbreaks and mass abandonment events, research and education. The partnerships hold tremendous value to the collaborative efforts towards penguin and seabird conservation.



# NGO COLLABORATION

In 2022, SANCCOB joined the NGO Collaboration, led by WILDOCEANS, a programme of the WILDTRUST. The collaboration consists of more than 10 national NGOs from both the terrestrial and marine space in South Africa. The aim of this approach is to pool resources and expertise to achieve a greater impact to

conserve biodiversity and assist the South African government to meet global and country commitments of 30 x 30. To benefit seabirds and the marine environment, SANCCOB is committed to this collective effort which will engage government towards more urgent and greater spatial protection of South Africa's Ocean.

## AFRICAN PENGUIN BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT PLAN

SANCCOB continues to support the South African Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment in implementing the actions outlined in the African Penguin Biodiversity Management Plan. SANCCOB leads on the transponder project and manages all aspects of transponder insertion in penguins at wild colonies, data management, coordination of funding, reporting to donors and to the conservation authorities. Robben Island, Dyer Island and Bird Island now have an Automated Penguin Monitoring System (APMS), a linked weighbridge with ground reader that we have installed in collaboration with BirdLife South Africa. The marking of seabirds in the wild and from rehabilitation centres provides essential information on penguin survival and breeding success. In addition, the weighbridge is aimed at assessing body condition of penguins before foraging trips and on their return.

Other actions in the plan include the bolstering of wild chicks and their release back into the wild. SANCCOB has developed a finely tuned system which includes the ranger's nest monitoring activities

and subsequent rescue of abandoned or compromised chicks and eggs. Since 2006, we have admitted thousands of rescued chicks and eggs, and have released 186 fledglings over the last three years at De Hoop Nature Reserve, a collaborative partnership with BirdLife South Africa and CapeNature. The establishment of a new colony is another action listed in the BMP. A ground reader has been installed at the newly established colony, which is already showing promising results. One of the fledglings released at De Hoop in 2021 has been resighted by the reader as well as a rehabilitated adult from Dyer Island that had been treated by another rehabilitation organisation.

SANCCOB also acts as custodians of the oiled wildlife equipment funded by the American Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) SAFE Disaster Relief Programme. This equipment is stored in Cape Town and in Gqeberha to be utilised in the event of a seabird pollution incident. Funding is ring-fenced and regular reports are submitted to the BMP Steering Committee.



# RESPONSIBLE FISHERIES ALLIANCE

## SANCCOB JOINS THE RESPONSIBLE FISHERIES ALLIANCE (RFA)

SANCCOB firmly believes that to succeed in our mission we must work with all relevant stakeholders, including the fishing industry. In 2022, SANCCOB became a member of the Responsible Fisheries Alliance (RFA) alongside WWF-SA, BirdLife South Africa, Oceana, SeaHarvest and I&J.

The RFA is a partnership of like-minded organisations working together to ensure that healthy marine ecosystems underpin a robust seafood industry in southern Africa. Formed in 2009, the Alliance members contribute resources to share information, expertise and competencies to positively affect commercial fishing while influencing policy and fishery governance.

Several members of the SANCCOB team participate, including sub-working groups and Steering Committee meetings. Relevant research proposals and projects are considered for RFA funding and vessel-based training to fisheries crews is planned to include seabird interactions and best practice. In the first quarter of 2023, a strategy workshop was held where five strategic objectives of the RFA emerged as important pillars to drive change towards environmental sustainability in the South African fishing industry.





# NAMIBIAN FOUNDATION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF SEABIRDS (NAMCOB)

Great progress has been made post-establishment of NAMCOB. A strategic workshop was held in April 2022 amongst project partners, including the Namibian government, to discuss priority areas and long-term strategic objectives. The Constitution was finalised, and a governance committee was appointed whereby SANCCOB proudly assumes a position on the Executive Committee.

The last two years have focused on improving Tier 1 and 2 oiled wildlife

capability through training and building oiled wildlife equipment stockpiles. In November 2022, Nicky travelled to Namibia and attended the official handover ceremony of oiled wildlife response equipment to the Namdeb Diamond Corporation in Oranjemund, before heading to Lüderitz to hand over another shipping container of equipment to Debmarine Namibia. Both events were well attended by the local communities, government officials, and dignitaries. The Deputy Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR) travelled





with the team from Windhoek to officiate the equipment handover. SANCCOB and the Ministry of Fisheries presented on the challenges facing seabirds and the marine ecosystem, highlighting the establishment of NAMCOB, and how this newly established organisation will assist the ministry in achieving its mandate.

Now that NAMCOB officially exists, the partners have been working hard to capacitate the new organisation. The Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources confirmed that they had no plans to deploy rangers on key seabird islands within Namibia's MPA in the future. Given the success of SANCCOB's Penguin and Seabird Rangers in collaboration with South African conservation authorities, NAMCOB began planning to deploy four rangers on Halifax, Ichaboe, Mercury and Possession Islands outlined in a draft Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources. Recruitment

started in the first quarter of 2023 whereby a director, four rangers and an Office administrator were advertised. Recruitment and training are aimed to be concluded by the end of September 2023.

Once seabird rangers are deployed, rescued seabirds will be transferred to the existing rehabilitation facility at the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources. However, as this facility is limited in size, NAMCOB plans to build a dedicated marine conservation centre, which will accommodate a rehabilitation facility, an education and interactive space and financially sustainable initiatives such as a gift shop and a small coffee shop. Visitors to Lüderitz will be invited to visit and learn about the threats facing marine species and their environment, and more importantly, the actions that are being taken to save species from extinction.

*African penguins on the coast of Namibia.*





# NIMPA

## A COLLABORATIVE 5-YEAR PROJECT TO STRENGTHEN AND EXPAND NAMIBIA'S MARINE PROTECTED AREA NETWORK AND IMPROVE LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES FOR COASTAL COMMUNITIES

Led by the Namibia Nature Foundation, a multi-million Euro funding application to the Blue Action Fund was successful with the project officially starting on 1 April 2023. SANCCOB is one of the sub-grantees and our role in the project is focused on the seabird and MPA aspects. A 10-day trip was conducted in August 2022 to identify and interview key stakeholders as part of the Blue Action Fund proposal development. The workshops took place in Lüderitz, Swakopmund and Windhoek, and included representation from various government ministries, industry, NGOs, and local interested parties. Feedback included the lack of ocean literacy, insufficient government funding for NIMPA monitoring/surveillance and enforcements, and poor data capture systems. Despite Namibia declaring the Namibian Islands' Marine Protected Area (NIMPA) in 2009, it lacked resources to effectively implement a management plan. Furthermore, although many people in Lüderitz are employed

by the small-scale fishing sector, severe social problems are prevalent as well as high unemployment rates. The concept of NAMCOB was supported by the community with the understanding that job creation through NAMCOB would be conservative at first but would develop over time.

Over the 5-year period, The Blue Action Fund will support the appointment of staff for NAMCOB, as well as associated skills development. SANCCOB will lead on the collection of baseline data on populations of biomass indicator species at key sites, which account for >95% of the Namibian African penguin population. Through the African Penguin and Seabird Ranger programme, we will assist to standardise data collection and provide supportive measures in ecological monitoring. We will advise and work with MFMR on improving breeding habitat, mitigation against predators and population reinforcement, focusing on endangered seabirds within NIMPA.





# ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION, AWARENESS & SKILLS DEVELOPMENT



## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Environmental education, awareness, and skills development are key components required to achieve SANCCOB's strategic conservation objectives, which include: bolstering seabird populations through successful rehabilitation; the release of hand-reared wild origin chicks; the protection of seabird colonies by addressing in-colony threats such as disease, predation, habitat degradation and extreme weather events; mitigating the effects of oil on wildlife through oil spill prevention, preparedness, and response; and increased food availability for seabirds.

Our holistic approach toward environmental education focuses on learner and community engagement, and our objectives are to create awareness and compassion for threatened seabird species and the marine environment, inspire conservation-minded action, and encourage sustainable behavioural change.

With a South African population of almost 61 million, of which 28% are under the age of 15, it is our goal to engage with the future custodians of our natural environment and resources and awaken an eagerness

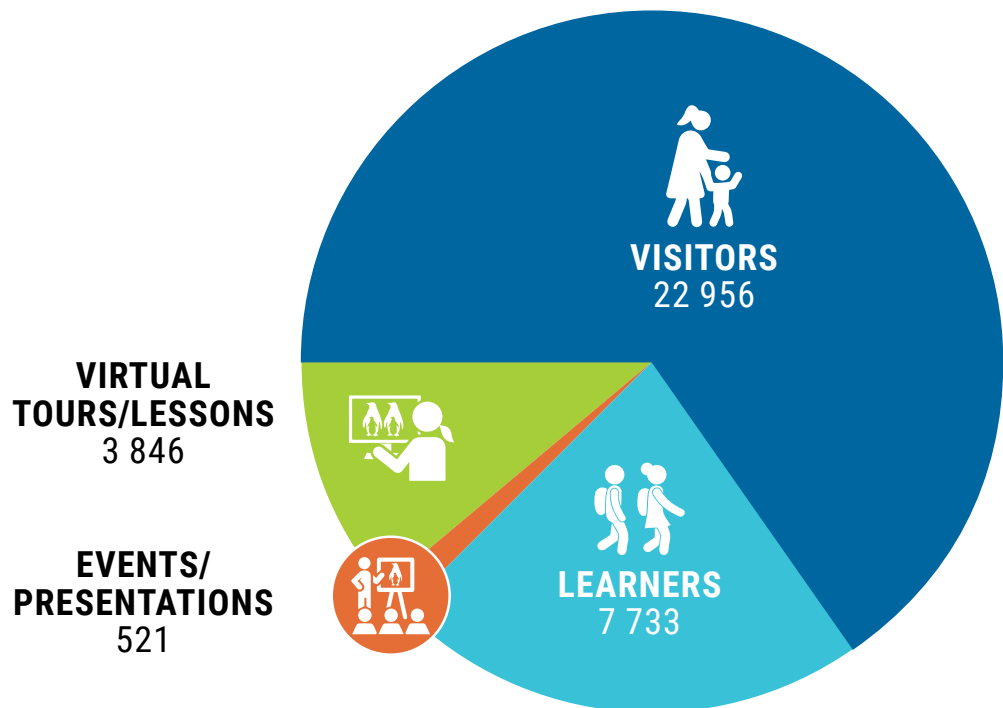


to act, by educating individuals on how their actions can have a positive impact on the environment.

SANCCOB has several tour offerings that vary in duration from 30 minutes to 2.5 hours, and cater to individuals of all interests and ages. Our 'Behind the Scenes' tours offer a guided tour with an experienced and knowledgeable tour provider throughout the seabird facility, whilst our personalised tours (2.5 hours) include a detailed tour of the seabird hospital, and provide the opportunity to meet skilled and experienced SANCCOB personnel and discuss seabird conservation. Finally, our children-focused tours (30 minutes) focus on fun and engaging sensory activities to keep our younger audiences entertained, and include touching taxidermy, dressing up in a penguin suit, penguin waddling (and singing), and learning about marine and seabird conservation. SANCCOB also

offers informative and entertaining talks to schools, libraries, churches, retirement villages or businesses. For our international audience, or audiences that cannot travel to SANCCOB, we offer Skype sessions which include an interactive lesson on African penguins and other seabirds, marine conservation, a virtual encounter with an African penguin in SANCCOB's care, and a penguin adoption certificate for the group.

Despite the Cape Town facility being closed to the public from November 2022 to February 2023 due to the outbreak of avian influenza within the facility, the Cape Town and Gqeberha teams educated thousands of visitors, learners, and supporters during the period under review, as outlined in the graph below.





SANCCOB strives to continuously expand the reach and improve the effectiveness of our education programs to all South Africans, and during the year under review, Simbonile Mdunyelwa, who joined the SANCCOB team during May 2022 as the Education Supervisor (Gqeberha), diversified SANCCOB's product offering by providing lessons in both English and Xhosa. Simbonile was fulfilling a WESSA internship in the Education Department in Cape Town when the position became available, and due to his exceptional interpersonal skills, dedication, and commitment to SANCCOB, he was appointed to fulfil this role.

SANCCOB Cape Town's Education Supervisor, Sharnay Wagner, was chosen by the Wildlife Conservation Network's Career Program as one of Africa's top six aspiring conservationists for 2023.

## SANCCOB CAPE TOWN

The Royal Portfolio Foundation, one of SANCCOB's long-term supporters, requested a lesson for their sponsored school, Leliebloem Home, and on Saturday, 21 May 2022, 18 learners joined for a 2-hour education programme, and several further lessons for various age groups followed.

On Thursday 23 June 2022, SANCCOB attended a presentation by Inge Adams, the Quarantine Aquarist at the Two Oceans Aquarium. The presentation was informative, and highlighted the importance of collaboration between like-minded NGOs, to conserve our environment and the wildlife that depend on it.

As a recipient of this prestigious award, Sharnay will receive multi-year funding, tailored access to training opportunities, facilitated peer learning and mentorship and financial support to contribute toward educational materials and a community outreach project at one of the two mainland penguin colonies in Cape Town. The Wildlife Conservation Network was founded in 2002, and the Career Program was launched in 2022 to support the career growth of wildlife conservationists who are committed to community engagement and empowerment, and who work towards protecting endangered wildlife and ensuring that wildlife and people coexist and thrive.

2023 was an exciting year of enhanced collaborations and partnerships with both current, and new, stakeholders.

As mentioned earlier in this report, and in line with the SANCCOB/Robben Island Museum MoU, SANCCOB's first Robben Island beach cleanup for 2022 was held on 20 June 2022, and a second clean-up took place on 17 September 2022, to celebrate International Coastal Cleanup Day. 20 staff members, interns and volunteers from SANCCOB were able to join the efforts to clean the Island, and the day was enjoyed by all! We look forward to enhancing our environmental education collaboration with Robben Island Museum, and discussions are currently underway to do so.



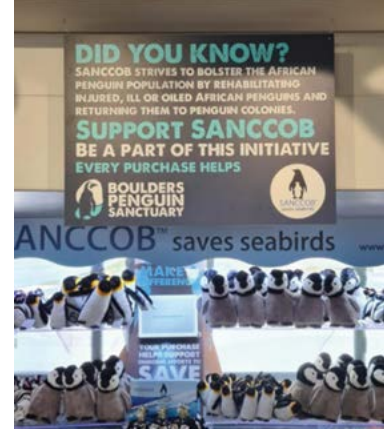
*Leliebloem Home learners wearing their penguin masks*

In collaboration with Tourvest Destination Retail, SANCCOB's branding is now beautifully displayed at the Boulders Shop, which is a first for SANCCOB and correlates the SANCCOB brand with the penguin colony in Simon's Town. This is an amazing opportunity for SANCCOB and African penguin conservation, particularly due to the high ecotourism value of the Boulders Beach penguin colony. Furthermore, SANCCOB's collaboration with Tourvest Destination Retail has expanded, with the entity funding an impactful environmental education and community engagement programme which services the local community during the 2023/2024 financial year.

During December 2022, the education team partnered with an international online platform to host over 1,700 learners over several lessons. "Exploring by the Seat of Your Pants" is an online lesson platform that bridges the gap between learners sitting in their classrooms with scientists, conservationists, experts, and educators working in these fields. These lessons reach thousands of learners per day and across seven continents, and we are privileged to be part of this initiative.



*SANCCOB now features prominently at the Boulders Shop in Simon's Town*



Several engagements were held during the year under review with WESSA, Nature Connect, Western Cape Disaster Management, and Cape Nature, to expand on our organisations' education impact. We are excited to collaborate with like-minded organisations and look forward to opportunities ahead.

The education team also engaged with several international zoos and aquaria who house African penguins, and discussions are underway to join forces with our conservation partners and expand African penguin conservation education and awareness, to international audiences.

To honour a staff member who went above and beyond their call of duty to save an injured Hartlaub's gull, the President Hotel (Bantry Bay) requested an engagement with SANCCOB to hand over a certificate to the "Hartlaub's Hero" in question. The hotel was also awarded a certificate of appreciation for their compassion towards seabirds!



## SANCCOB GQEBERHA

The education team continued to work with like-minded NGOs in Algoa Bay, namely the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA) and Sustainable Seas Trust (SST), to host beach clean-ups along the Cape Recife beach. Three beach clean-ups were held during the year and were enjoyed by all attendees. SANCCOB and SST continued to host holiday clubs during the period under review, which includes a host of fun activities for aspiring young conservationists. The collaboration between SANCCOB and SST has grown from strength to strength, and now includes co-hosted school groups, in addition to Holiday clubs.

The “Welcoming the Whales to Algoa Bay” festival took place on 4 June 2022 at The Willows Resort, and the theme of the event was “entanglement”. SANCCOB was invited to exhibit at the event, which was a wonderful opportunity to engage with the public and discuss seabird conservation.

In celebration of World Oceans Day, SANCCOB Gqeberha welcomed 13 employees from CHEP, a Brambles Company, which is a global organisation with more than 12,000 employees internationally, who volunteered their time and assisted with cleaning and gardening tasks before conducting a beach clean-up.

SANCCOB also welcomed employees’ from 3 John Dory’s branches in Gqeberha, who performed a beach clean-up, and gifted SANCCOB staff and interns with meal vouchers. Campus Key, a national luxury student accommodation provider with an office in Gqeberha, also sent employees to volunteer at the centre in June, and they assisted with various cleaning tasks and replaced the sand in the Gqeberha Home Pen.

Marine Week took place during October 2022 and was hosted at SANCCOB in collaboration with six organisations: BayWorld, Nelson Mandela Bay Metro Education Department, South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON), SST, Rezco Asset Management, WESSA and Zwartkops Conservancy. Each organisation exhibited and prepared a lesson/activity that aligned to the topic ‘There is only one Planet.’ SANCCOB provided the venue, SST sponsored four buses, and WESSA and Rezco Asset Management sponsored the lunch packs for the learners. Over the two days, 215 learners and seven educators from four different schools participated in the Marine Week activities, and students were given the opportunity to learn about the marine environment, including seabirds, tides and

*SANCCOB Gqeberha receives thousands of learners annually.*



tidal animals, rock pools, marine pollution, food webs and estuaries, all in a fun and interactive way.

The education team also expanded its collaboration with two new entities: GetReal Adventures, a company that organises team building, adventure events, and leadership camps for schools and corporates, and AIDA Cruises, a tour liner which offers a unique 60km bicycle tour through Gqeberha, with a stop at SANCCOB, to enjoy a tour and refreshments.

The Volkswagen Group South Africa (VWSA) “Show of Hands” programme successfully took place at the Gqeberha centre in November 2022, with nearly 200 VWSA employees, and their relatives and friends, volunteering and participating in various tasks around the facility. Tasks included a beach clean-up, gardening, and painting three murals – all sponsored by VWSA. The Managing Director of VWSA was also in attendance and received a tour of the facility after joining the VWSA team to plant trees.

## DE BEERS MARINE PROJECT

De Beers Marine South Africa, avid supporters of seabird conservation and environmental education, once again funded a national education programme which was rolled out in both Gqeberha and Cape Town. SANCCOB Cape Town welcomed 42 Grade 6 learners from Kuils River Primary School – all who were the top achievers in Natural Science and Technology in Grade 5, and the three-part programme included two school visits, and one visit to SANCCOB. In Gqeberha, 42 Seagull Primary School learners participated in the programme, which comprised four education lessons focusing on various topics in the marine conservation sphere. The first three education lessons were conducted offsite at the school, whilst the fourth and final lesson was conducted at the SANCCOB Gqeberha facility.

Lessons included an introduction to SANCCOB, an explanation about climate change and the challenges faced by seabirds in the wild, a practical recycling lesson whereby learners created their own unique artwork out of recycling materials, and finally a tour of the rehabilitation facilities. Each learner received a resource pack which included SANCCOB activities, a story book and a stationery set, and in addition, the schools also received a resource container filled with items to support follow-up lessons with other learners at their schools who did not participate.

The learners were very engaging and thoroughly enjoyed the activities prepared by the education teams. In Gqeberha, an added advantage was that the education team could explain the information and answer questions in Xhosa, as English was not a first language for some of the students.





## PEAS TRUST

The PEAS Trust funded education project commenced in June 2022 and ended in October 2022, where 60 learners from three under-resourced schools were chosen to participate in the programme, namely St Tomas High School, Douglas Mbopha High School, and Lamani Primary School.

Four engaging lessons were conducted; three offsite at the respective schools, and one at SANCCOB Gqeberha. Each learner and school received resource packs to encourage further environmental education at home and at school, and the lessons were enjoyed by all.

## AFRICAN PENGUIN AWARENESS DAY (APAD)

Considering the success of the Annual Penguin Awareness Day event held in 2021 at SANCCOB Cape Town, the team decided to continue to host the event at the Cape Town centre. Half-priced tours were offered on 7 and 8 October 2022, and visitors were warmly welcomed by the entire SANCCOB team, many exhibiting on exciting conservation topics such as research, rehabilitation, veterinary science, and oiled wildlife preparedness and response.

Conservation partners such as CapeNature also joined in on the fun and exhibited at the event. SANCCOB Cape Town welcomed 245 visitors over a two-day period.

In Gqeberha, SANCCOB's first ever Penguin Flipper Festival was held to celebrate APAD on 8 October 2022. The event included talented local musicians, prizes, and was a huge success.

## PENGUIN PALOOZA

On 25 November 2022, the annual Penguin Palooza was held at the Stony Point penguin colony, in celebration of the long-standing conservation partnership between SANCCOB and CapeNature. The day commenced with key speakers such as Dr Ernst Baard (CapeNature Executive Director: Conservation Operations), Monica Stassen (SANCCOB Preparedness and Response Manager), Counsellor Els (Ward Councillor: Betty's Bay) and Pierre De Villiers (CapeNature Senior Manager: Marine and Coasts), and was proceeded by fun

activities, competitions, games, and spot prizes for guests. Learners from areas surrounding the penguin colony were invited to participate in the festivities and were treated to a walk through the penguin colony and a pre-packed lunch. A penguin release was not possible on the day due to the avian influenza outbreak, but this did not dampen spirits, and the event was a great success. The event was also live streamed to both organisations' social media platforms, to allow supporters from across the globe to join the celebration.

# VOLUNTEERS

SANCCOB's dedicated volunteers are an extension of the staff and are an integral part of daily operations. Not only do volunteers assist with hands-on work with the seabirds, but also assist with additional functions such as education, research, marketing, and administration. SANCCOB values each volunteer and would not be able to achieve its strategic objectives without their support.

During the period under review, SANCCOB welcomed 63 international volunteers from 11 different countries, and warmly welcomed 178 local volunteers.

This year marked the introduction of two new international volunteer programmes. The Helping Hands programme offers volunteers who do not wish to handle birds an opportunity to support seabird

conservation by performing tasks such as bird food preparation, laundry, Home Pen and equipment cleaning. The Best of Both Worlds programme provides volunteers with a once in a lifetime opportunity to obtain hands-on experience working with endangered African penguins and other seabirds in two beautiful tourist destinations in South Africa. The first three weeks is spent at the Cape Town facility, learning about and assisting with seabird hospital laundry, food preparation, seabird hospital and bird care equipment hygiene and cleaning, flying bird aviaries and penguin rehabilitation, and forms the foundation for effective seabird rehabilitation. The following three weeks are spent at the Gqeberha facility, where the focus will be on seabird rehabilitation, laundry, and biosecurity.



**INTERNATIONAL  
VOLUNTEERS**

**63**

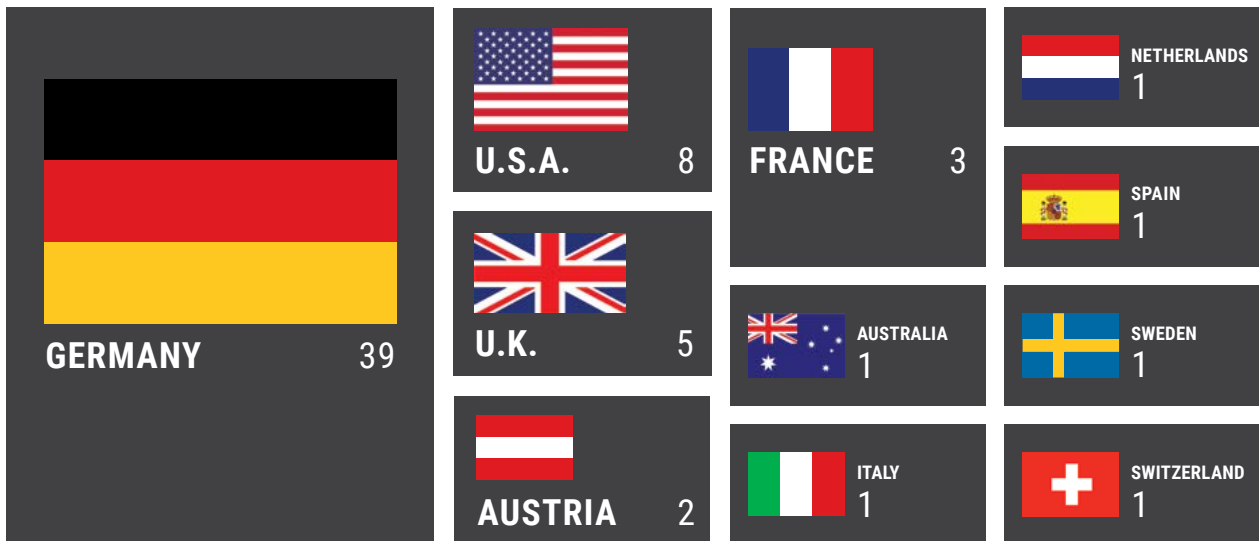


**LOCAL  
VOLUNTEERS**

**178**



## INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN



## INTERNSHIPS

SANCCOB is recognised internationally as a leader in seabird conservation, and our internship programmes provide an excellent opportunity to develop a unique skillset that can only be acquired at SANCCOB. Programmes range from 3-6 months and vary from seabird rehabilitation to nursery, to chick rearing.

Interns join the programme independently via SANCCOB, or through external stakeholder programmes, where SANCCOB hosts interns that have been placed with us to acquire a specific skillset. During the period under review, most of the interns joining SANCCOB's internship programmes were from South Africa. We are privileged to work with the various organisations that entrusted SANCCOB to host their interns.

2022 marks the third year that SANCCOB has hosted interns via FirstRand. FirstRand provides work experience opportunities to individuals who have never been employed, have not had the opportunity to obtain a tertiary education, and who hail from under-resourced or vulnerable communities, and the objective is to upskill and develop them to provide a greater opportunity to obtain employment in future.

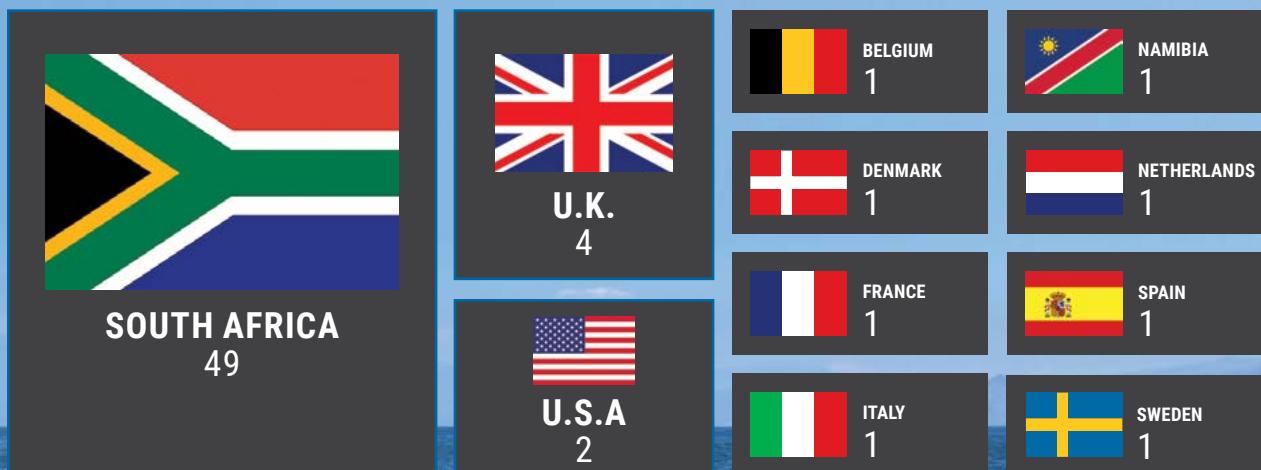
Global Training, an international organisation from Basque, Spain, provides students from various universities with a chance to travel globally and complete an internship based on their studies. One student completed four months as an intern in the Chick Rearing Unit but was offered an employment opportunity in Spain and had to return home.

SANCCOB was excited to host a Namibian student from the Namibian University of Science and Technology for a second year. The programme, funded by the University of Pretoria, aims to provide students with practical skills in seabird conservation.

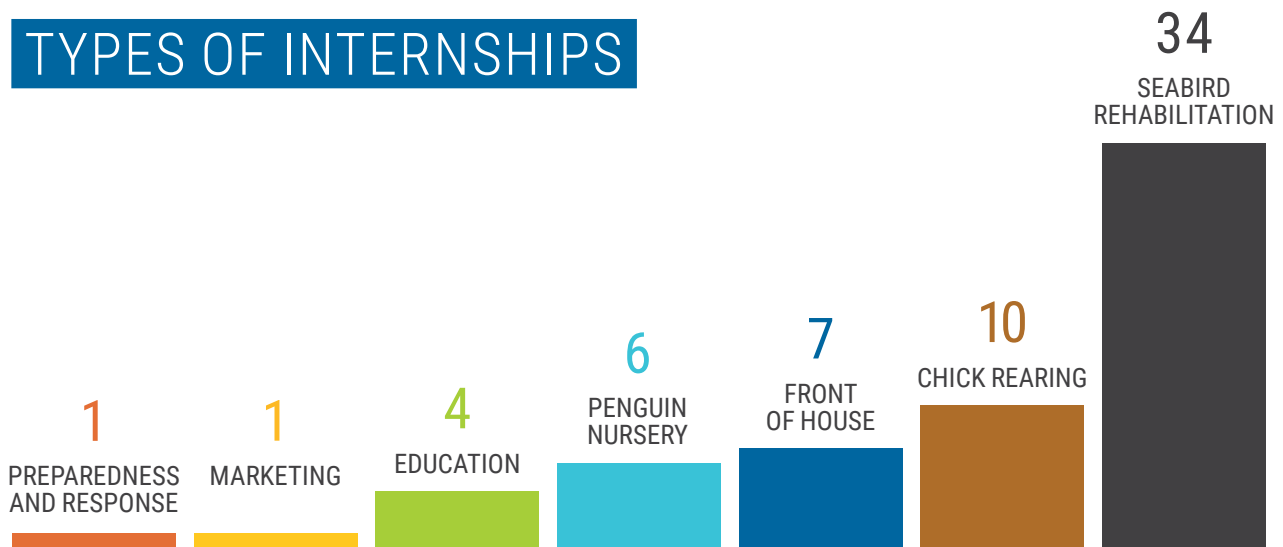
SANCCOB commenced the application process to host SANBI Groen Sebenza interns during the period under review, which provides students with an opportunity to be placed at a host institution for 2 years. We have been successful and will receive interns for various departments at SANCCOB in 2023-2024 year ahead.

SANCCOB was pleased to host 4 Cape Peninsula University of Technology students for their Work-Integrated-Learning. 2022 marks the third year that SANCCOB has been given the opportunity to host WIL students. The students completed three-month internships in the Seabird Rehabilitation Department. As part of their placements, they were required to complete a research assignment with the guidance of SANCCOB's Research Department. They also completed basic education training on facilitating tours and public engagement with our education team.

## INTERN COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN



## TYPES OF INTERNSHIPS



## ANIMAL PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

SANCCOB's Animal Professional Experience programme is offered to employees of AZA (Association of Zoos and Aquariums), EAZA (European Zoo Association) or similarly accredited institutions. These organisations are close conservation partners and unwavering supporters of SANCCOB's work, and the support offered by Animal Professional Experience keepers is always warmly welcomed and greatly appreciated.

Participants work closely with the SANCCOB team to care for sick, injured and abandoned African penguins and other seabirds, and

the programme is hosted throughout the year, excluding July, August, and September months, where high volume admissions are not common unless there are rainstorms flooding nests oil spill responses.

Over the past year, SANCCOB welcomed 15 Animal Professional Experience keepers from zoos and aquariums in Europe and the United States of America, which include: California Academy of Sciences, Lincoln Park Zoo, Jacksonville Zoo, Bird World, Denver Zoo, Bristol Zoo, Zoological Society of London, Maryland Zoo, and Dallas Zoo.

## VET EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME

The Veterinary Experience Programme was developed to expose participants to a career in veterinary medicine, and whilst SANCCOB is not a typical veterinary practice, participants benefit from the opportunity to observe the Clinical Veterinarian work in our world-renowned seabird rehabilitation facility. The Vet Experience Programme

remained popular during the period under review, where twenty-nine participants joined for either one or two weeks two weeks to either learn from SANCCOB before they begin tertiary studies or to broaden their knowledge if they have already completed their qualifications.



# VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION

Throughout the period under review, special effort was placed to appreciate our volunteers and interns, who sacrificed time and energy to help us save seabirds.

Appreciation was especially necessary during the avian influenza outbreak at the Cape Town facility, where volunteers

went above and beyond to support seabird conservation during this challenging time.

To all our wonderful volunteers and interns: Thank you for everything that you do - we couldn't do this without you.

# EDUCATION AND VISITOR CENTRE

Every year, SANCCOB welcomes thousands of visitors, learners, and trainees to our Cape Town facility, which includes a humble education and training space, with a limited capacity of 20 individuals. A larger and universally accessible Education and Visitor Centre has been part of SANCCOB's vision for many years and was included in the funding application to the National Lotteries Commission, for which funding was received in 2012. Unfortunately, this funding was insufficient to finance both the seabird hospital facility and the Education and Visitor Centre, and the priority was placed on the seabird hospital facility.

We are pleased and proud to announce that we will commence construction of a new and improved Education and Visitor centre at the Cape Town facility during

2023. This centre will provide a larger and more professional education and training space for learners, trainees, and visitors, overlooking our beautiful Home Pen, which is home to our long-term residents. The centre will also include universally accessible ablution facilities, and a coffee shop with views of Table Mountain. The coffee shop will cater for our visitors, interns, and volunteers, and will allow us to prepare lunch packs for project funded under-resourced school learners.

Our vision will come to fruition, which will allow us to expand our education, awareness, and skills development initiatives, and we look forward to providing our valued supporters an update in our next annual report.

# STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME



The financial results reflect a 12-month period from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

SANCCOB's conservation work is supported by local and international funders, working with us to reverse the decline of wild seabird populations in southern Africa.

**SANCCOB NPC (Registration number: 2001/026273/08)**

## ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

FIGURES IN RANDS	12 MONTHS ENDED 31 MARCH 2023	12 MONTHS ENDED 31 MARCH 2022
Revenue	19 687 020	16 313 854
Cost of sales	(501 926)	(343 922)
<b>Gross profit</b>	<b>19 185 094</b>	<b>15 969 932</b>
Other income	1 386 085	652 451
Operating expenses	(21 966 790)	(17 904 631)
<b>Operating loss</b>	<b>(1 395 611)</b>	<b>(1 282 248)</b>
Investment revenue	668 188	408 620
Fair value adjustments	1 312 444	1 187 203
Finance costs	-	(145)
<b>Profit for the year</b>	<b>585 021</b>	<b>313 430</b>
Other comprehensive income	-	-
<b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>	<b>585 021</b>	<b>313 430</b>

**Conclusion:** The above is an extract of the Statement of Comprehensive Income reflected on page 7 of the audited Annual Financial Statements. The Annual Financial Statements are available on request.

# CURRENT STAFF & BOARD OF DIRECTORS

ANNDONIA EALES

Receptionist

ALBERT SNYMAN

Researcher

BERNADETTE PAYNE

Bird Rehabilitator EC

CJ HAVEMANN

Centre Manager EC

CALISTA VAN ZYL

Administrator EC

CASEY HAVENGA

Bird Rehabilitator

DR DAVID ROBERTS

Clinical Veterinarian

DEBORAH LAYNE

Bird Rehabilitator EC

DELENE GOCH

Accountant

EDUARD DROST

Rehabilitation Supervisor EC

GAVIN PETERSEN

Stony Point Assistant

Marine Ranger

DR KATTA LUDYNIA

Research Manager

CAITLIN VAN DER MERWE

Bird Island Penguin

& Seabird Ranger

JADE SOOKHOO

Bird Rehabilitator

JESSICA GRANT

Resource Developer: Group

MELISSA CADMAN

Chick Rearing Unit Supervisor

MELISSA-ANN KNOTT

Head Of Operations

MICHELLE LIEBENBERG

Bird Rehabilitator

MONICA STASSEN

Preparedness &  
Response Manager

NATALIE MASKELL

Chief Executive Officer

NEVALLIAN ABRAHAMS

Volunteer & Intern Coordinator

NICHOLAS NGCATHU

Robben Island Penguin  
& Seabird Ranger

NICOLA STANDER

Head of Conservation

NICOLE COGILL

Marketing & Fundraising  
Coordinator WC

NINA GROBLER

Resource Developer: Individuals

NOLEEN CHITEWERE

Housekeeper WC

NONJABULO SOSIBO

Educator WC

PETER VAN DER LINDE

Bird Rehabilitator

ROMY KLUSENER

Rehabilitation Manager

RONNIS DANIELS

Resource  
Development Manager

RUSHAAN MARTHEZE

Procurement and  
Inventory Officer

SHARNAY WAGNER

Education Supervisor WC

SIBONGILE GEORGE

Rehabilitation Assistant

SIMBONILE MDUNYELWA

Education Supervisor EC

YANDISA CWEKWE

Dassen Island Penguin  
& Seabird Ranger

ZAMOKUHLE LAZOLA

Bird Island Penguin  
& Seabird Ranger

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

INGE CILLIERS

Chairperson

VERNON BOULLE

Treasurer

NATALIE MASKELL

Chief Executive Officer

DR SAMANTHA PETERSEN

Board Director

DR ANTON WOLFAARDT

Board Director

KATE HANDLEY

Board Director

JOHN COOPER

Board Director

PAMELA IDELL

Board Director

In addition to staff listed,  
SANCCOB also funds the placement  
of five Penguin and Seabird Rangers  
in Simon's Town.



# FUNDERS & SUPPORTERS



## R100,000 +

- Aachener Tierpark
- Abax Foundation
- ACTIF Foundation
- ARTIS Amsterdam Royal Zoo
- Association of Zoos and Aquariums - Saving Animals from Extinction
- Cincinnati Zoo
- City of Cape Town
- Columbus Zoo and Aquarium
- Dallas Zoo
- De Beers Marine
- Der Grüne Zoo Wuppertal
- Dierenpark Amersfoort
- Fort Wayne Children's Zoo
- Georgia Aquarium
- Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust
- International Fund for Animal Welfare
- Isdell, P
- Le Pal Nature Foundation
- Lomas Wildlife Trust
- Lottoland South Africa (Pty) Ltd.
- MySchool MyVillage MyPlanet
- Nausicaá Centre National de la Mer – Boulogne sur mer
- Old Mutual Staff Volunteer Fund Trust
- Ripley's Aquarium
- Riverbanks Zoo and Garden
- Rupert Nature Foundation
- SeaWorld and Busch Gardens Conservation Fund
- Steinhart Aquarium at the California Academy of Sciences
- Stichting Wildlife
- The Holder Family
- The Mapula Trust
- The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore
- WAVE Foundation - Newport Aquarium
- Wise Philanthropy Advisors
- Zoo Wrocław

## R50,000 – R99,999

- African Bird Club
- Allwetterzoo Münster
- Antwerp Zoo
- Cheyenne Mountain Zoo
- Clark, B
- Combe Martin Wildlife & Dinosaur Park
- Daikoku, Y
- East Coast Zoological Society
- FNB Philanthropy Donor Choice Foundation Trust
- Ford Wildlife Foundation
- Greensboro Science Center
- Grindrod South Africa (Pty) Ltd.
- Henry Vilas Zoo
- Italian Association of Zookeepers
- Jacksonville Zoo
- Joan St Leger Lindbergh Charitable Trust
- Océarium du Croisic
- Penguins International
- Silwood Trust
- The Florida Aquarium
- Toronto Zoo
- Tulsa Zoo
- West Edmonton Mall Marine Life
- Zoo Duisburg
- Zoo Wrocław DODO Foundation

## R20,000 – R49,999

- Abraham Foundation
- Ackerman, W
- Alma Natura Trust
- Animal Survival International
- Aviornis International
- Barbara & Edwin Courtenay Trust
- Bidvest Services
- Brown, S
- Callister, D
- Cockcroft, H
- Columbus AAZK Chapter
- Fondation Ensemble
- Ingram, E
- Jacobs, J
- Jenkinson's Aquarium
- Leers Charitable Trust
- Masser, C
- National Aviary Pittsburgh
- Newall, A
- Noakes Charitable Trust
- Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo
- Paradise Wildlife Park
- Schneier, S
- Sealife France
- Seneca Park Zoo
- South African Association of Freight Forwarders
- Southern Colorado AAZK
- Sunshine Aquarium
- Taipei Zoo
- The Florence Ethel Trust
- Torina Zoo
- van der Merwe, A
- von Leesen, A and K
- W J Weise Charitable Trust
- Zoo De La Palmyre
- Zoo de Sables

## R10,000 – R19,999

- Aschidamini, B
- Bickhart, TM
- Brunner, D
- Cape Bird Club
- Erie Zoo
- Goodall, A
- Honolulu Zoo
- Jenner, D
- Jotun Paints South Africa (Pty) Ltd.
- Kotze, J
- Krushan Foundation
- Leonard Miller Charitable Foundation
- Magellan College Counseling
- McCreddie, R
- Milnerton High School
- Pamela Barlow Charitable Trust
- Ross, V
- Safari de Peaugres
- Seneca Park Zoo
- AAZK Chapter
- Spees, JA
- St Andrew School for Girls
- Superina, L
- Taurus Cape Kelp
- The Debschein Trust
- The Royal Portfolio Foundation - The Silo Hotel
- The Stretch Foundation Trust
- Tierpark Berlin
- TotalEnergies EP South Africa
- UCT Underwater Club
- University of Pretoria
- Veilleux, M
- ZooTampa at Lowry Park

## R5,000 – R9,999

- Adventure Swim
- African Renaissance Productions
- Armstrong, NF
- Baber, J
- Berlin Zoo
- Birkenstock, D
- Black, W
- Bongers, K
- Brinkworth, M
- Broderick, E
- Castillon, J
- Catherwood, L
- Charalambides, E
- Como Park Zoo & Conservatory
- CryptoWorkx
- Curran, B
- Dasgupta, S
- de Klerk, BE
- Durban Undersea Club
- Ernst, D
- Euromonitor International (Pty) Ltd.
- Faruk Yalçın Zoo
- Final Touch
- Gubler, B

- Gutsche Investment & Management Company
- Hoërskool D.F. Malherbe
- Jan de Bruyn Diveteam CTDF
- Janke, M
- King, R
- Koffie Venter Trust
- KPRN Network GmbH
- Kunkel, C
- Kunz, G
- Lee, D
- Lele, S
- Lincoln Park Zoo
- Lourens, N
- MacDonald, J
- Mandel, J
- Minnaar, N
- Reitz, T
- Schletterer, M
- Sealife Paris
- Sherry, R
- Shiga, K
- Shuttleworth, R
- Straubing Zoo
- Sullivan, M
- Superstrike Investments 121 (Pty) Ltd.
- The Waterclub Body Corporate
- von Tauchnitz, B
- Vorster, J
- Watson, B
- Werksman Attorneys
- Woodhill College
- Wu, C
- Zoo du Bassin d'Arcachon
- Zoo Salzburg

## BEQUESTS

- Aumonier, R
- Burger, T
- Courier, MW
- De Bie, GJ
- Spaans, CE
- Taylor, S

## IN-KIND SUPPORTERS R5000+

- SuperSpar Parklands
- Association of Zoos and Aquariums - Saving Animals from Extinction
- Backspace Technologies
- Biomark
- BUI
- de Sousa, F
- First Technology Western Cape (Pty) Ltd.
- HellermannTyton
- Known Design Co
- KwikSpar Flamingo Square
- NewLife Plastics
- Northfield Engineering
- Raggy Charters
- Sand Cloud
- Sika South Africa (Pty) Ltd.
- Volkswagen Community Trust Show of Hands
- Zoo Duisburg

## SPONSORS AND CAMPAIGN PARTNERS

- African Creative
- Arniston Bay
- Banana Skinz
- Biocom Solutions
- Davines
- Sand Cloud
- Shackleton Brewing Company
- Spec-Savers South Africa
- Stellenbosch Vineyards (Pty) Ltd.
- Sustainable Seas Trust
- The Relate Trust
- WaddleOn by Marts
- Woolworths (Pty) Ltd.
- Young Living Africa
- Ziggy's Rock and Reggae Bar



# IMAGE SOURCES

All images property of SANCCOB, with exception of the following:

Cover (Hartlaub's gull), page 26 (main):	Jean van der Meulen, Pixabay
Cover (Kelp gull):	Trheze, Pexels
Cover (Cape cormorant):	Rob de Greef
Cover (Cape gannets):	Birger Strahl, Unsplash
Cover (African penguins); pages 1, 2, 10 (top left, right), 17, 18, 21 (footer), 24, 25 (right), 31 (second from top), 38, 44, 49, 50 (main), 70:	Dan Callister
Page 9 (header):	Wolfgang Hasselmann, Unsplash
Page 9 (main):	Dimitri Simon, Unsplash
Page 12:	Insung Yoon, Unsplash
Page 13:	Kiekie Kie Wildlife Photography, Pixabay
Page 16 (header):	Jimmy Liao, Pexels
Page 16 (main):	Danielle Barnes, Unsplash
Page 26:	Karolina Nowak, Unsplash
Page 28:	Angela Hobbs, Unsplash
Page 29:	Joss Woodhead, Unsplash
Page 30:	Jacky Q, Unsplash
Page 31 (header):	Ami Tesler, Unsplash
Page 33 (header), back cover:	Joel Herzog, Unsplash
Page 33 (main):	Mikell Darling, Unsplash
Pages 34, 82:	Magda Ehlers, Pexels
Page 36:	Harry Cunningham, Unsplash
Page 40 (header):	Jeffrey Eisen, Pexels
Pages 40 (main), 56 (main):	Taryn Elliott, Pexels
Page 41:	Damien de Gouveia
Page 43:	Silas Baisch, Unsplash
Page 46:	Thomas Bennie, Unsplash
Page 50 (header):	Glib Albovsky, Unsplash
Page 52 (header):	Jonathan Cooper, Unsplash
Page 53:	Fengyou Wan, Unsplash
Page 56 (header):	Martin Brechtel, Unsplash
Page 59:	Robert Laszlo, Pexels
Page 60:	Malia24/Matthias, Pixabay
Page 61 (footer):	JPierre Desvigne, Pixabay
Page 62:	Anita/Kolibri5, Pixabay
Page 63:	Airam Daitoon, Pexels
Page 64 (header):	Fungai Tichawangana, Unsplash
Page 64 (main):	Kristina Schultheiß, Pexels
Page 74:	Simon Ray, Unsplash
Page 77 (header):	Stephen Noulton, Pexels
Page 79:	Robert Keane, Unsplash
Page 83:	Marco Federmann, Pixabay







## CAPE TOWN

22 Pentz Drive, Table View, Cape Town, Western Cape 7441, South Africa

Tel: +27 21 557 6155, Fax: +27 21 557 8804

## GQEBERHA

Cape Recife Nature Reserve, Marine Drive, Gqeberha, Eastern Cape 6011, South Africa

Tel: +27 41 583 1830, Fax: +27 41 583 1835

## After hours and weekends:

Tel: +27 78 638 3731 (Cape Town)

Tel: +27 64 019 8936 (Gqeberha)

## Support SANCCOB

Account holder: SANCCOB

Bank: First National Bank

Branch: Table View

Branch code: 203 809

Account number: 5923 713 5859

Account type: Current

Swift code: FIRNZAJJ

Email: [reception@sanccob.co.za](mailto:reception@sanccob.co.za)

Registration Number: 2001/026273/08, NPO number: 003-134 NPO, PBO number: 130001247

SANCCOB will issue Section 18A tax certificates for donations of R100 or more per annum to donors eligible for tax in South Africa, in accordance with the Income Tax Act 58 of 1962.



[www.sanccob.co.za](http://www.sanccob.co.za)