



Crowned Cormorant

Kuifkopduiker

Phalacrocorax coronatus

The Crowned Cormorant is endemic to southern Africa and has been recorded between Swakopmund (2214DA) and Holkom Meester se Baai (3421BD) (Crawford *et al.* 1982b). Atlas records extend the northern limit to Mōwe Bay (1912BC). It has bred at 48 localities between Walvis Bay (2214CD) and Cape Agulhas (3420CC) (Crawford *et al.* 1982b, 1994). The distribution map shows gaps in the distribution between Bird Rock, Walvis Bay, and the next colony to the south at Mercury Island (2514DB) (Williams 1987), as well as between Namibia's southernmost colony, Sinclair Island (2715DA), and the Orange River (2816CB). These gaps may be a result of a paucity of observations in these regions, or reflect unsuitable habitat. It has not been recorded at Hollam's Bird Island (2414CB) (Williams & Dyer 1990). The overall population is about 2700 breeding pairs (Crawford *et al.* 1982b).

It was once regarded as a subspecies of the Reed Cormorant *P. africanus* (Crawford *et al.* 1982b), which uses freshwater habitats and has a wide Afrotropical distribution.

Habitat: It is coastal and is not found more than 10 km offshore (Siegfried *et al.* 1975). It utilizes a variety of habitats for nesting, including rocky cliffs, ledges, stacks,

caves, boulders, gullies, kelp wrack on beaches, bushes, trees, supports for marine platforms, wrecked ships, stone walls and washed-up crayfish traps (Crawford *et al.* 1982b). It forages at sea in shallow water close inshore and occasionally in estuaries up to 500 m from the sea. It breeds at and feeds near Schaapen and Meeuw islands in Langebaan Lagoon (3318AA). The only known non-marine breeding locality is at Strandfontein Sewage Works (3418BA), only 100 m from the sea (Crawford *et al.* 1982b).

Movements: It is a resident species. Ringed juveniles have moved up to 277 km from their nests (Crawford *et al.* 1982b). Adults frequently move their breeding sites on an island between years (Crawford *et al.* 1994). Two occurrence models on the west coast are almost constant, indicating that birds are present throughout the range throughout the year. Five records east of Cape Agulhas were in February and May, and could represent post-breeding dispersal.

Breeding: It breeds throughout the year (Rand 1960). In agreement with Maclean (1985c), the models show peak activity earlier in spring–summer in the south than in the north. The considerable scatter of data points around the models reflects the substantial interannual variation that occurs in the timing of breeding (pers. obs).

Interspecific relationships: It often nests in association with other vertebrates (Siegfried *et al.* 1976). It breeds in small numbers on rocky outcrops or boulders in colonies of Jackass Penguin *Spheniscus demersus*, Cape Gannet *Morus capensis*, Cape Cormorant *P. capensis* and Cape Fur Seal *Arctocephalus pusillus*, as well as among Hartlaub's Gulls *Larus hartlaubii* and Swift Terns *Sterna bergii*, and in bushes or trees with herons and egrets. It thus utilizes

breeding space not occupied by larger animals and benefits as a result of protective advantages associated with larger colonies (Crawford *et al.* 1982b).

Historical distribution and conservation: Breeding at Bird Rock is on supports under the platform there (Berry 1974). It is likely that this platform facilitated a considerable northern extension of the breeding range. The Crowned Cormorant was listed in the first edition of the South African Red Data book as 'uncommon and vulnerable' (Siegfried *et al.* 1976), but removed from the revision (Brooke 1984b). However, on account of its being endemic to South Africa and Namibia, continued monitoring of its status is regarded as important (Brooke 1984b). Mortality, by starvation and suffocation, has arisen from the incorporation of fishing nets and line into nests. It preys on fish of no commercial importance (Rand 1960), and is not threatened by competition with fisheries. The Crowned Cormorant is susceptible to human disturbance at breeding sites (Siegfried *et al.* 1976). If displaced from its nest, Kelp Gulls *L. dominicanus* may prey on eggs and chicks.

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Recorded in 55 grid cells, 1.2%

Total number of records: 1683

Mean reporting rate for range: 17.5%

