

Short Note

New breeding locality for Crowned Cormorant

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The Crowned Cormorant *Phalacrocorax coronatus* is endemic to the southern African subregion with an estimated population of about 2700 pairs, breeding at 48 localities between Walvis Bay, Namibia and Cape Agulhas, South Africa (Crawford *et al.* 1994, Crawford 1997). The easternmost point at which breeding has previously been recorded is 2 km west of Aasfontein (34°46'S, 19°50'E), where 35 nests were recorded in January 1981 (Crawford *et al.* 1982). Non-breeding birds have been seen further to the east as far as Holkom Meester se Baai (34°23'S, 21°49'E) (Crawford *et al.* 1982).

On 29 October 2003, counts were made of breeding seabirds at the Number 12 Stacks (33°59'S, 23°35'E) in the De Vasselot section of the Tsitsikamma National Park. Counts were made of occupied nests and fledged young of all species present on three stacks visible from the mainland. These three stacks were thought to be those labelled as Carbo, Capensis and Dominicanus by Crawford (1983).

While counting nests of White-breasted Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo lucidus* and Cape Cormorants *Phalacrocorax capensis*, four occupied nests of Crowned Cormorants were located on the stack corresponding to that named Carbo by Crawford (1983). All four had a sitting bird and it was not possible to see whether the nests contained eggs or chicks. Most occupied nests of nearby White-breasted and Cape Cormorants contained chicks. In addition, 20 fledged White-breasted Cormorants and 71 fledged Cape

Cormorant chicks were counted on this stack (Table 1). The solitary Little Egret *Egretta*

Table 1
Counts of occupied nests, old nests and fledged young of all species breeding at Number 12 Stacks, 29 October 2003

	Stack		
	Carbo	Capensis	Dominicanus
White-breasted Cormorant			
<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>			
Occupied nests (total)	15	0	0
Nests with chicks visible	6	0	0
Old nests	13	0	0
Fledged young	20	0	0
Cape Cormorant			
<i>Phalacrocorax capensis</i>			
Occupied nests (total)	27	2	8
Nests with chicks visible	25	0	6
Old nests	not counted	not counted	not counted
Fledged young	71	103	94
Crowned Cormorant			
<i>Phalacrocorax coronatus</i>			
Occupied nests (total)	4	0	0
Nests with chicks visible	0	0	0
Old nests	0	0	0
Fledged young	0	0	0
Little Egret			
<i>Egretta garzetta</i>			
Occupied nests (total)	1	0	0
Nests with chicks visible	0	0	0
Old nests	0	0	0
Fledged young	0	0	0
Kelp Gull			
<i>Larus dominicanus</i>			
Occupied nests (total)	1	11	5
Nests with chicks visible	0	0	0
Old nests	0	0	0
Fledged young	0	0	0

garzetta nest contained one egg.

Crowned Cormorants can breed throughout the year (Rand 1960). At Malgas Island off the west coast of South Africa, most breeding takes place between September and April with a peak in breeding activity between December and March (Crawford *et al.* 1999). It is thought that the birds recorded at Number 12 stacks were either incubating eggs or brooding small chicks.

The potential for the Crowned Cormorant to extend its breeding range on finding suitable breeding sites is illustrated by the construction of the Bird Rock Platform north of Walvis Bay, Namibia, and the wreck of the Meisho Maru No. 8. These resulted in previous breeding range extensions of 415 km to the north and 16 km to the east respectively (Crawford *et al.* 1994). This observation extends the breeding range of the Crowned Cormorant by approximately 355 km to the east and is about 169 km east of the nearest observations made of non-breeding birds. The species was not recorded by previous seabird surveys made in Tsitsikamma National Park (Crawford 1983).

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