



KORSMAN CONSERVANCY NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2022

Burning Season

The grass and reed burns were completed during July and August on dates when the winds were most suitable. Thanks to all the volunteers who took part – without you it wouldn't be possible.





Going Bats

Local bat and bee expert Leon de Nysschen (left in the photo) offered to build and donate a bat box, which we eagerly accepted.

Leon is such an enthusiast that he collects bat droppings and examines them under a microscope for remains of insects, which indicates the local diet. Leon will teach us how to monitor the box for bats in future.



Co-ordinated WATERbird Count

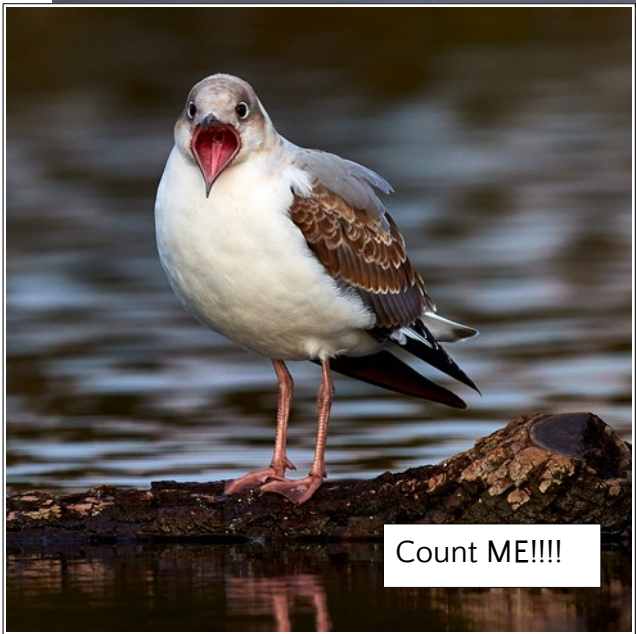
We assisted the East Rand Bird Club for the winter CWAC count.

The largest species count was 96 Grey-headed gulls, double the amount of the next most populous species.

Photos by David Dooley, on other dates.



Flying IN for the count



Count ME!!!!

Treasured Trash

While wading around the Sanctuary on an inspection, I came across an unusual piece of litter which weighed several kilograms: a Tibetan Buddha statue lying in the mud. Definitely thrown in, not blown in.

The committee decided that Buddy the Buddha would bring us good luck, and so it proved. When I posted my find on the community WhatsApp group, Buddy was eagerly adopted by Pragna who made a donation to Korsman in exchange.



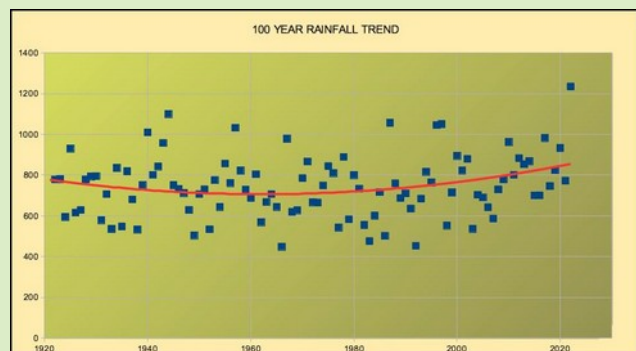
Keeping it Clean



Although we haven't held any formal litter pickups, small teams of dedicated volunteers have been giving their time to keep the Sanctuary clean.

Water Level, and the Future

The water level has finally been pumped down to an acceptable level for the time of year. During this hydrological year (1 October–30 September) we recorded 1246mm, more rain than all our available catchment records for the last 100 years.



A pre-2010 weather prediction was that climate change would cause the eastern half of South Africa to become wetter and suffer more intense storms, and that the south-western Cape would have less winter rainfall. Both predictions accurate, as it turned out. We can expect more of the same in the future.

RIP, Goliath family

The Goliath breeding pair and two chicks on the rock island, have tragically died. Autopsies of the adult birds (discovered separately) were inconclusive, however we believe the death of the whole family was a natural chain of events.

Our theory is that the male bird was ailing for a couple of weeks before death and unable to fulfil his parental role. Then the female (whose body I discovered first, near the nest) and chicks starved to death, as she was unable to leave the nest to hunt.

The autopsies were conducted by vet Cliff Bull of Craig View Veterinary Clinic. The first bird, the female, was in poor condition with intestinal parasites, muscle trauma from a pre-mortem injury, and very little stomach contents. The male's body, which I found a couple of days later in a different place, had probably died first and was too decomposed to get any information.



Photos by David Dooley in June and July

The deaths followed unusual behaviour we saw by the nest-guarding parent on duty, the day before she died. She repeatedly left the nest and chased another adult Goliath heron from different points in the Sanctuary, but the bird being chased flew over the nest and landed elsewhere. Perhaps she was looking for her mate. It was very unusual to leave the chicks alone at that stage. She was not seen feeding the chicks, only catching a small fish next to the rock island. The vet confirmed there was very little stomach content.

The following day, there was no activity in the nest. I discovered the female heron's body lying next to the rock island and the two chicks dead. One of them was very underdeveloped. At 10 days there would normally be about four chicks of which two or three would survive to independence. This indicates the parents struggled to feed them properly from the time they hatched.

I waded around the perimeter of the Pan but didn't find any other dead birds, which rules out a disease such as avian botulism. We are monitoring the second Goliath breeding pair on the nest opposite 50 The Drive.

Exciting Sightings

Some rarer visitors have been spotted at Korsman, and we enjoyed the return of Lesser flamingoes.

Some beautiful photos of the visitors and residents by two of our members.



Comb duck by David Dooley



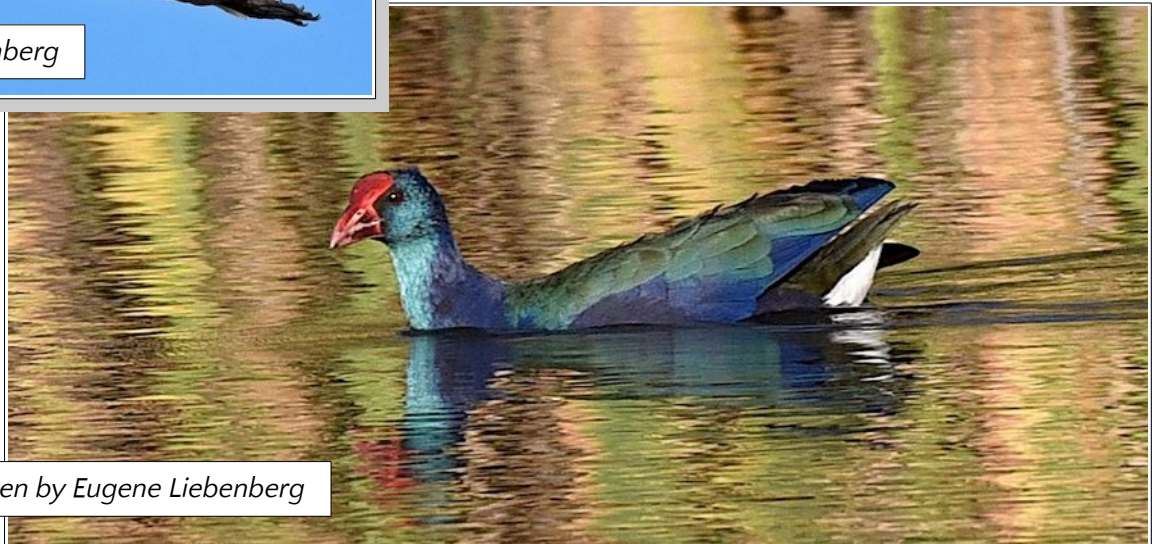
African Jacana by David Dooley



Lesser Flamingo by David Dooley



Sacred Ibis by Eugene Liebenberg



African Purple Swamphen by Eugene Liebenberg