



Bank Cormorant

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Phalacrocorax neglectus

The Bank Cormorant is endemic to southern Africa. The known nonbreeding range is from Cape Cross (2113DD) to Die Walle (3419DD) (Cooper 1984; Williams 1987). Atlas records extend the northern limit to just south of Hoanibmond (1912DD). Breeding or attempted breeding is known for 50 localities between Swakopmund (2214DA) and Quoin Rock (3419DC) (Cooper 1981; Williams 1987; Crawford *et al.* 1994), beyond which reporting rates decreased rapidly. It does not usually occur more than 10 km from land, although it has been reported 122 km offshore (Rand 1960; Cooper 1981). The population in the early 1980s was estimated to be about 9000 pairs (Cooper 1981).

Habitat: It is a strictly marine species. It breeds on rocks, walls or artificial platforms in close proximity to the sea (Cooper 1981). Nests are often lost to rough seas, but nest building recommences within 24 hours of such loss (Cooper 1986). It forages solitarily inshore, primarily on the sea bottom amongst kelp beds, but also over shingle or coarse sand and in midwater (Cooper, J. 1985).

Movements: Adults have a foraging range of less than 10 km; few ringed adults have been recovered farther than

this distance from the site of ringing (Cooper 1981). Juveniles disperse beyond the foraging range of adults, and have moved up to 459 km (Cooper 1981). The models show a dip for Lüderitz (2615CA) to St Helena Bay (3218C) February–April, whereas south of St Helena Bay, reporting rates are constant throughout the year. Reasons for these patterns are uncertain. Migration of adults is unlikely, but it is possible that dispersal of young after the breeding season increases conspicuousness.

Breeding: It breeds throughout the year with interannual variation in the main season (Rand 1960). In the southwestern Cape Province there is often a peak in numbers of active nests April–October, whereas at the populous colonies of Mercury (2514DB) and Ichaboe (2614BD) islands, breeding may be maximal in summer (pers. obs). The models suggest an intermediate June–January pattern for the northern Cape Province and southern Namibia. Regional differences in the breeding season need fuller investigation; they may be related to diet. Off central Namibia, it eats mainly the Bearded Goby *Sufflogobius bibarbatus* (Crawford *et al.* 1985), whereas farther south various fish and invertebrates are fed upon (Rand 1960).

Interspecific relationships: It has been displaced from nest sites by Cape Fur Seals *Arctocephalus pusillus* (Crawford *et al.* 1989), and may compete with other seabirds for breeding space at Mercury and Ichaboe islands (Duffy & La Cock 1985).

Historical distribution and conservation: The historical distribution was probably similar to the present. It was listed in the first edition of South African Red Data book as 'uncommon and vulnerable' (Siegfried *et al.* 1976), but removed from the revision (Brooke 1984b) because of its wide distribution and the large number of breeding colonies (Cooper 1981). However, on account of its endemism to the subcontinent, continued monitoring is regarded as important (Brooke 1984b). Furthermore, more than 70% of the population breeds at two islands off Namibia: Mercury and Ichaboe (Cooper 1981).

At Mercury Island, seals had displaced more than 1300 pairs, or 15% of the world population, from breeding sites by 1986 (Crawford *et al.* 1989). In January 1993, following a programme of disturbance of the seals, numbers of Bank Cormorants had recovered by about 300 pairs, but remained below former levels (pers. obs). Several island colonies in the western and northern Cape Province have decreased in recent years, and several former breeding localities have been vacated (Crawford *et al.* 1994). It is susceptible to disturbance by humans when breeding, especially as unattended eggs and chicks are often lost to Kelp Gulls *Larus dominicanus* (Cooper 1981). All breeding localities require legal protection, especially those on small rocks accessible to people at low tide (Cooper 1981).

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Recorded in 59 grid cells, 1.3%

Total number of records: 1441

Mean reporting rate for range: 15.0%

