

AN UNUSUAL MAINLAND BREEDING SITE OF MARINE WHITEBREASTED CORMORANTS

PHALACROCORAX CARBO IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

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During an aerial survey on 18 January 1987, a breeding colony of cormorants, thought to be Whitebreasted Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo*, was seen on the mainland coast at Die Dam (34 42S, 20 10E), southern Cape, South Africa. The colony of about 40 nests was situated on sand dunes behind the beach. This identification was confirmed when Ms E. Smuts found a colony of 40-45 nests of Whitebreasted Cormorants in the same area on 1 December 1987 (Southern African Ornithological Society nest record card collection). The nests were placed on hillocks in the sand dunes within the Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus* colony at this locality (Crawford *et al.* 1982, *Ostrich* 54: 164-177). This is a new breeding locality for marine Whitebreasted Cormorants in southern Africa: the 70th recorded (Cooper 1988, *Cormorant* 16: x-y and references therein).

Previously reported coastal colonies of Whitebreasted Cormorants on the southern African

mainland are on cliffs, rocky headlands, islands in estuaries or lagoons, or on manmade structures (Brooke *et al.* 1982, *Gerfaut* 72: 188-220, Cooper 1988, *Cormorant* 16: x-y). This is apparently the first record of a colony being built on the ground of the mainland proper. At Sandwich Harbour, South West Africa/Namibia, Whitebreasted Cormorant nests built on isolated sandbars in the lagoon were deserted when the formation of sandspits allowed jackals, presumably *Canis mesomelas*, access to the nests (Berry & Berry 1975, *Madoqua* 9 (2): 5-18). Presumably the large expanse of surrounding dunes at Die Dam provided at least partial protection from the attacks of mammalian predators. Cape Cormorants *P. capensis* have previously bred in the Kelp Gull colony at this locality (Cooper 1987, *Cormorant* 14: 52).

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