

SEABIRDS BREEDING AT PATERNOSTER ROCKS, VOËLEILAND (NOORDWESBAAI)
AND HOSPITAL ROCK BETWEEN 1975 AND 1980

F. KRIEL, R.J.M. CRAWFORD, P.A. SHELTON & T. McLOUGHLIN

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Paternoster Rocks (32 44S, 17 53E), Voëleiland (32 53S, 17 52E) Noordwesbaai and Hospital Rock (32 57S, 17 52E) (Fig. 1) were visited in 1979 to count breeding seabirds.

Paternoster Rocks were approached from the sea on 16 January 1979, and Bank Cormorants *Phalacrocorax neglectus* were observed breeding at seven separate rocks (Fig. 2). Landings were effected at most sites and totals of 85 nests and 165 adults were counted. On one of the rocks six Cape Cormorant *P. capensis* nests were also seen (Fig. 2), the overall head count of this species numbering 704 individuals. Seven Whitebreasted Cormorants *P. carbo* were present, but there were no signs of breeding. On 1 November 1975, nine Whitebreasted Cormorant nests were counted at rock p (Fig. 2) (J. Cooper, Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, *in litt.*). For Bank Cormorants additional census information is available for some of the rocks (J. Cooper *in litt.*) and is summarized in Table 1. It is apparent that this species nested at at least nine rocks during the period 1975-1980. At one of these (rock d of Fig. 2) breeding was observed in 1975 and 1976, but not in 1979 or 1980, although during the latter two years, old guano was present. The reason for desertion is not known. The colony at rock p expanded by more than 50% after 1975. Increased space for nesting is likely to have been available following cessation of breeding by Whitebreasted Cormorants. From aerial photographs Rand (1963) recorded Bank Cormorants breeding on two rocks in June 1957, but identification of the rocks is uncertain and no counts were given. He remarked that Cape Cormorants might also breed if human interference could be controlled.

Voëleiland was visited on 18 April 1979, and 27 Bank Cormorant nests were counted. Of these 17 were empty, three contained 1 egg, five 2 eggs, one 3 eggs and the other, one small chick. An aerial photograph of this colony was taken at 10h20 on 27 November 1978, using a 75 mm lens and 70 mm black and white film rated at 200 ASA. A total of 32 nests may be distinguished (Fig. 3). Other counts of Bank Cormorants at Voëleiland include : 25 occupied nests on 1 November 1975, 20 occupied nests on 31 August 1976, and 27 nest sites on 25 April 1980 (J. Cooper *in litt.*). The 1975 and 1976 counts were from the mainland, but in 1980 a landing was made. Over the period 1975-1980, the population has been relatively stable. Breeding was observed on each visit, but was at an early stage in April of both 1979 and 1980. On 31 August 1976, four occupied Crowned Cormorant *P. coronatus* nests were present (J. Cooper *in litt.*), but this species was not recorded in subsequent years.

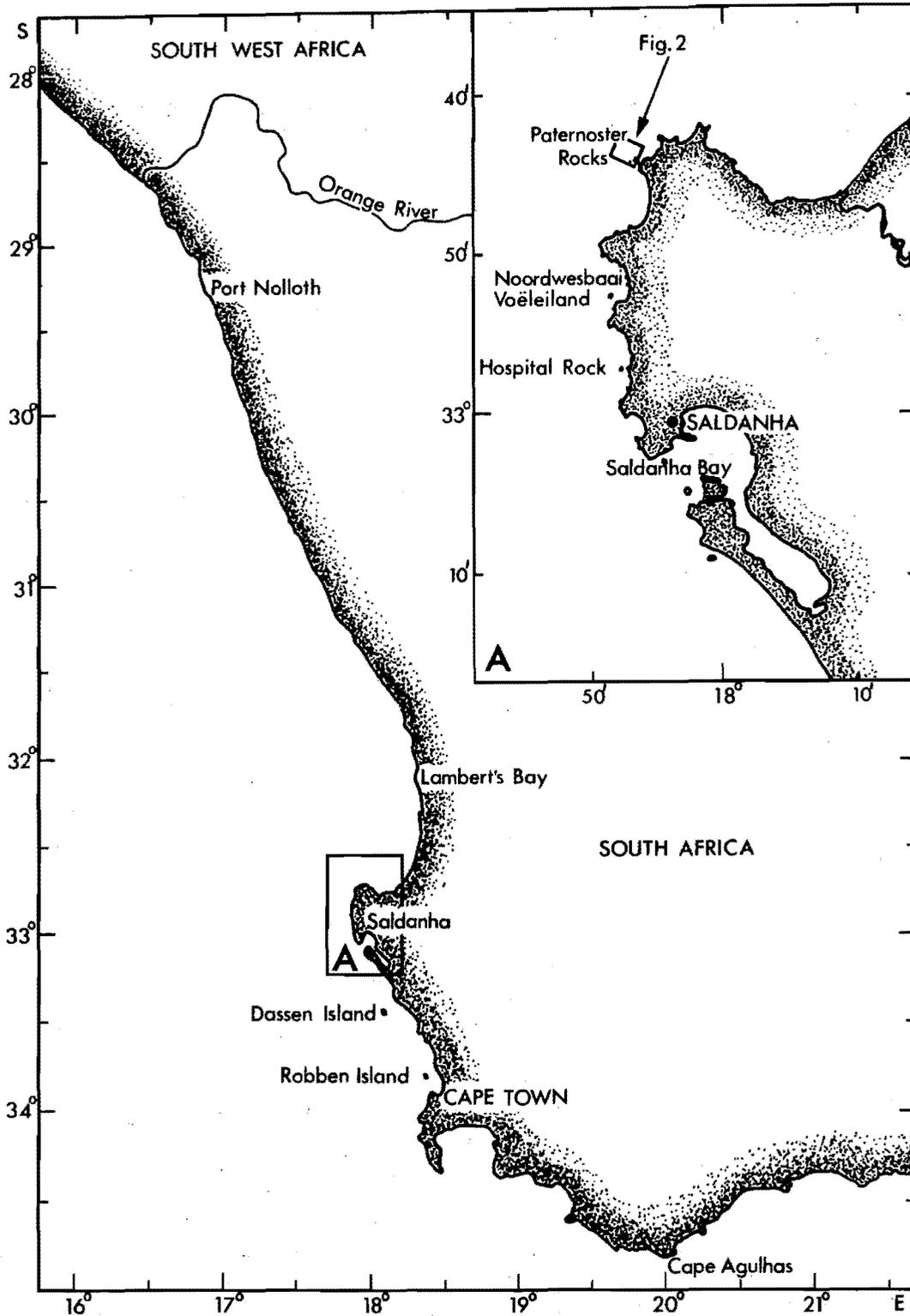
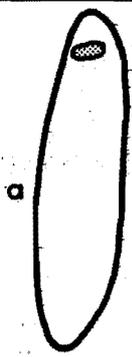


Figure 1

The southwestern Cape Province of South Africa indicating Paternoster Rocks, Voëleiland and Hospital Rock



 BANK CORMORANT
 CAPE CORMORANT

Figure 2

Sketch of the Paternoster Rocks indicating breeding localities of Bank and Cape Cormorants *Phalacrocorax neglectus* and *P. capensis* on 16 January 1980

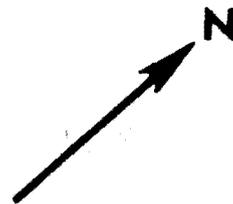
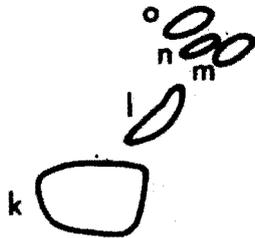
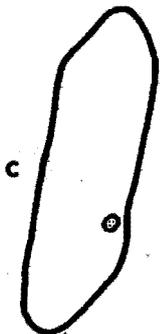


TABLE 1

COUNTS OF BANK CORMORANT *PHALACROCORAX NEGLECTUS* NESTS AT NINE
OF THE PATERNOSTER ROCKS, 1975 - 1980

Rock (see	Date of census			
Fig. 2)	1 Nov. 1975 [*]	31 Aug. 1976 [*]	6 Jan. 1979	25 Apr. 1980 [*]
a	c. 8 ⁺	No count	8	c. 15 ^{**}
b	No count	No count	12	0 ⁺⁺
c	No count	No count	3	0
d	11 ⁺	5 ⁺	0	0
p	29 ⁺	25 ⁺	46	46 ⁺⁺
q	No count	No count	0	3
s	No count	No count	11	No count
t	No count	No count	1	No count
v	No count	No count	4	No count
Total	48	30	85	64

^{*} From J. Cooper (*in litt.*)

⁺ Count from shore through telescope

^{**} Count from rock b

⁺⁺ Landing effected

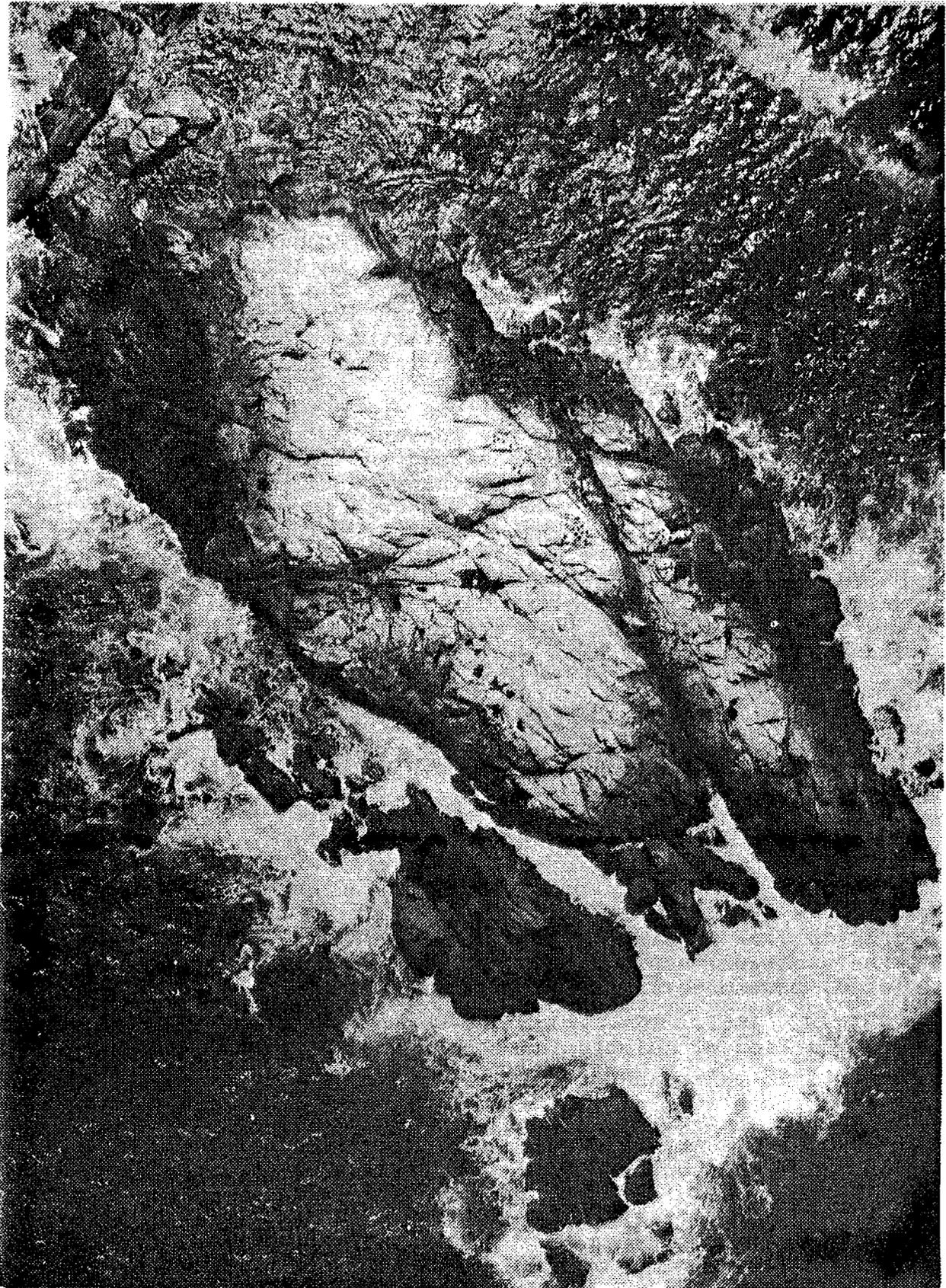


Figure 3

Aerial photograph of Voëleiland taken on 27 November 1978. Bank Cormorant *Phalacrocorax neglectus* nests are visible as dark dots on lighter rock surface.

Hospital Rock, which at low tide is accessible from the mainland, was surveyed on 18 April 1979. Fifteen Bank Cormorant nests were present on two rocks. Of these, 12 were examined, 10 being empty and two having one egg each. Twenty-six nest sites were recorded on 9 May 1980 (Cooper in press).

Paternoster Rocks were formerly scraped for guano on a regular basis (Rand 1963). The maximum recorded yield since 1898 was 113 tonnes in 1923, whereas the most recent collection, that of 1973, yielded 50 tonnes. An application to again scrape guano at this locality was received by the Sea Fisheries Institute, under whose jurisdiction the rocks fall, in 1979. However, permission was not granted on account of the undesirability of disturbing one of South Africa's larger Bank Cormorant breeding colonies (Cooper in press). Utilisation by Bank Cormorants of seven rocks for breeding in 1979, compared with only two in 1957, and the presence also of breeding Cape Cormorants in 1979 suggest that the seabird populations are benefitting from reduced disturbance and that the current policy is justifiable. The smaller populations at Voëleiland and Hospital Rock may be expected to evidence similar responses to the level of human activity. On account of the easy access to Hospital Rock, there is a possibility that its Bank Cormorant colony will be subject to increased interference by casual visitors in future years, especially with rapid developments at Saldanha Bay and other localities in the southwestern Cape already underway. Adequate measures should be taken to prevent unnecessary disturbance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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- F. Kriel, P.A. Shelton & T. McLoughlin, Sea Fisheries Institute, Pvt Bag X2, Roggebaai 8012, South Africa.
- R.J.M. Crawford, Tsitsikama Coastal National Park, P.O. Storms River 6308, South Africa.