

Gansbaai Declaration May 2008

The First African Penguin Workshop of the Dyer Island Conservation Trust was held at the Great White House, Kleinbaai, Gansbaai, South Africa, on 24 and 25 May 2008, attended by 40 participants.

- **Conscious that** the African Penguin was classified by IUCN as “Vulnerable” to extinction in 2002 on account of a decline in population size of 35% in three generations (30 years);
- **Alarmed that** the population size of the African Penguins has continued to decline since 2002 and is now currently at its lowest recorded level;
- **Noting that** South Africa’s northernmost breeding colony at Bird Island, Lambert’s Bay, became extinct in 2006, thereby increasing the separation of the populations in Namibia and South Africa;
- **Noting that** the key factors responsible for the population decline are likely to be
 1. shortages of food
 2. poor breeding habitat, resulting from past exploitation of islands and likely to be exacerbated by from anticipated climate change, leading to increased heat stress, increased susceptibility of nests to flooding and increased exposure to aerial predators
 3. documented predation by Cape Fur Seals on adult and juvenile penguins offshore of colonies
 4. oil pollution
 5. documented predation by cats on Robben Island;
- **Aware of the fact that** emergency response plans to combat oil pollution are not current and up to date;
- **Welcoming the fact that** the contribution which penguin rescue and rehabilitation makes to the conservation of African Penguins has been rigorously investigated and found to be substantial;

The participants of the First African Penguin Workshop in Gansbaai

- **Congratulate** the Namibian government on initiating the process for creating Marine Protected Areas, and **call on** the government to implement these as soon as possible;
- **Congratulate** the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism South Africa, Minister Marthinus van Schalkwyk, and the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) on the initiative to close the area around Dassen Island to fishing to investigate the effects of this management intervention on penguins;
- **Thank** the community of fishers for accepting and respecting the closure around Dassen Island;
- **Strongly encourage** management authorities to consider implementing similar measures around other penguin colonies in Namibia and in South Africa;
- **Stress** the need for DEAT to finalize the proposed legislation relating to seabirds and proposals relating to mpa’s;
- **Urge** research funding agencies to assist with providing resources to undertake conservation research into measures targeted at understanding, reducing and reversing declines in African Penguin populations;
- **Congratulate** CapeNature and the Dyer Island Conservation Trust (DICT) on the newly signed Memorandum of Agreement which initiates a partnership between the two organizations;
- **Support** DICT and CapeNature on the joint project to provide artificial nest burrows on Dyer Island, getting penguin nests out of the sun and away from aerial predators such as Kelp Gulls;
- **Encourage** DICT to engage in discussion with the conservation authorities at other colonies to provide artificial nest burrows;

- **Urge** Robben Island Museum to complete the cat eradication programme on Robben Island;
- **Support** the principles underpinning the penguin bolstering programme being initiated by Bristol Zoo Gardens;
- **Urge** the relevant authorities in both South Africa and Namibia to provide resources to bring the emergency oil spill response plans up to date;
- **Thank** SANCCOB and DICT for initiating the oil spill response exercise conducted at Gansbaai on 24 May 2008, and **request** that these exercises be arranged regularly;
- **Urge** the South African Maritime Safety Association (SAMSA) and all relevant authorities to continue efforts to prevent oil and other pollutants from entering the marine environment;
- **Urge** the SAMSA to warn coastal conservation authorities and seabird rehabilitation centres about potential environmental impacts when assessing damaged ships and potential shipping disasters so that preparations can be made timeously.
- **Urge** all relevant management and government authorities to develop funding schemes which will ensure the viability of seabird rehabilitation facilities;
- **Pledge** to work together co-operatively on issues related to research and monitoring of the African Penguin and to continue their efforts to work collaboratively and to make their results available to decision makers at all levels;
- **Pledge** to meet annually to discuss the latest research and to address current conservation and management issues pertaining to the African Penguin.