

## EDITORIAL

### TEN YEARS OF THE *CORMORANT*

The first issue of *Cormorant*, then a bulletin of the Southern African Seabird Group, was published in November 1976. Over ten years have past and it is therefore fitting to reflect in this editorial on what I said in the first one. I started that editorial: "Southern Africa has lagged behind in research on seabirds. It is surprising to think that the Jackass Penguin is still less well known than the Adelle." However, I went on to note the recent "upsurge in interest" in seabird research in southern Africa, specifically mentioning work on the Jackass Penguin and at sub-Antarctic Marion Island.

It is pleasing to report that the "upsurge" has resulted in a healthy batch of publications. Richard Brooke's excellent revision of the South African Red Data Book for birds (Brooke 1984, *S. Afr. Nat. Sci. Prog. Rpt* 97:1-213) lists 93 references for the Jackass Penguin in what is only a "selected", not a complete, bibliography. Sixtysix (71 %) of these are dated after 1976. "Penguins of the World: a bibliography" (Williams *et al.* 1985), reviewed in this issue of *Cormorant*, has one and a half pages of reference numbers for the Jackass Penguin in the species index; the Adelle Penguin gets two. So the Adelle is still ahead but the Jackass must be catching up! A closer look at the index shows that there are no less than 87 references for the Adelle Penguin with the subject code "behaviour"; for the Jackass Penguin there are only 21. Recent research on the Jackass Penguin has been ecological in nature, concentrating to a great extent on the species' vulnerable status. The Adelle seems to be under no threat and perhaps this is why research on that species has been more "academic".

Turning to Marion Island, a recent compilation by the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) Bird Biology Subcommittee of the Working Group on Biology reveals that South Africa has as many as 92 scientific articles published or in press for the period 1984-1986 alone, dealing with Southern Ocean seabirds. This figure compares most favourably with similar publication totals for the other countries involved in research on birds "down south".

What will be the situation in another ten years' time? Number of publications is by no means everything, it's the *quality* and *value* of the research that really count. In 1996 I hope to be able to look back on a decade of exciting, fundamental discoveries about seabirds, based on such "hi-tech" techniques as doubly-labelled water, satellite-tracking and a host of remote devices, as well as on good old-fashioned clear thinking.

Till then, enjoy seabirding!

John Cooper



