

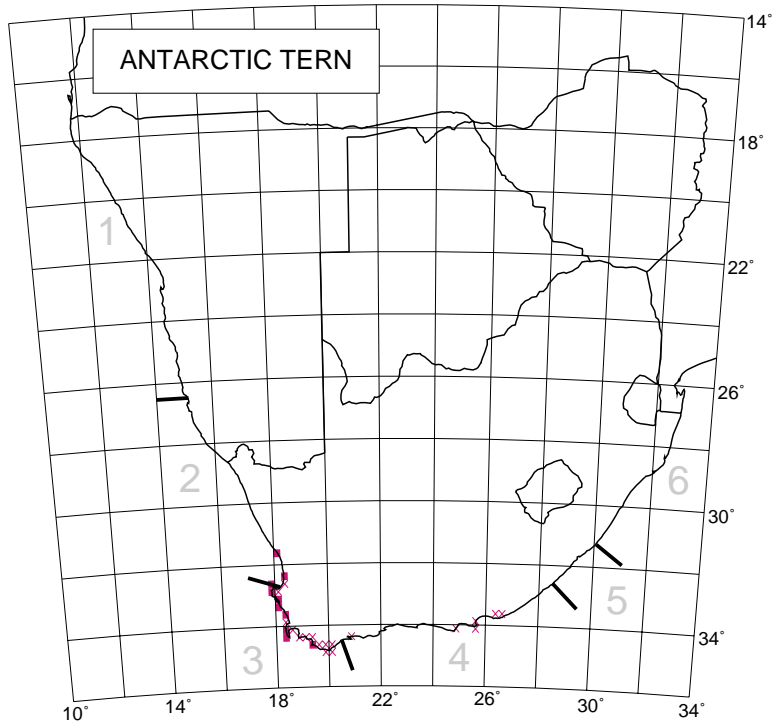
**Antarctic Tern**  
*Grysborsseeswael*  
*Sterna vittata*

The Antarctic Tern breeds on the coast of the Antarctic Peninsula and on Southern Ocean islands from New Zealand westwards to South America. Its status in southern Africa was reviewed by Cooper (1976) and Brooke *et al.* (1988). It is a regular, nonbreeding winter visitor to the south-western and eastern Cape Province between Lambert's Bay (3218AB) and East London (3327BB). Elsewhere along the coast of southern Africa it occurs as a vagrant. There are earlier records from near Walvis Bay (2214CD) (Brooke *et al.* 1988) and from KwaZulu-Natal (Cooper 1976; Cyrus & Robson 1980).

It feeds at sea but often roosts ashore on islands and at safe coastal localities. The largest recorded flocks in southern Africa were 4500 birds at Dassen Island (3318AA) in August 1977, and 4000 at Dyer Island (3419CB) in September 1983; Brooke *et al.* (1988) estimated the overall visiting population to be in excess of 15 000 birds.

During the nonbreeding season, South Africa supports *c.* 10% of the world population; the balance are found in South America and New Zealand (Urban *et al.* 1986). Visiting birds belong to two races: the nominate race which breeds on islands in the southern Indian Ocean and winters mainly on the east coast of southern Africa, and *S. v. tristanensis* from Tristan da Cunha and Gough islands which winters mainly on the southern and west coasts (Clancey 1980b; Maclean 1993b). A bird ringed on Dyer Island in May 1951 was retrapped on Gough Island in December 1969, 18.5 years later, and one ringed on Dassen Island (3318AC) in June 1983 was retrapped at its nest on the Kerguelen Islands in February 1985 (Sagar 1991; SAFRING).

It arrives from mid-April; departure is mainly during October, with few records during the summer breeding season (Brooke *et al.* 1988). It often arrives while still in nuptial plumage and reassumes this plumage before return migration to breeding localities. The largest congregations appear to be recorded on offshore islands August–September (Brooke *et al.* 1988), and the species is therefore most easily identified and counted at this time; the decrease in the modelled report-



Recorded in 23 grid cells, 0.5%  
 Total number of records: 260  
 Mean reporting rate for range: 3.1%

ing rates during these months suggests a pre-migratory movement from accessible roost sites on the mainland to these islands.

The presence of birds in nuptial plumage within a colony of Roseate Terns *S. dougallii* misled earlier observers into the belief that it bred on islets in the Bird Island group (3326CD) in Algoa Bay (Courtney-Latimer 1957, corrected in Cooper 1976).

Conservation needs during the nonbreeding season include the protection of known roosts from human disturbance and habitat alteration and the removal of feral cats that kill terns in roosts at Dassen and Robben (3418AD) islands (Brooke *et al.* 1988).

A.J. Williams

