

THE CAPE BIRD CLUB.

Newsletter No. 54.

October 1959.

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Striegau,
Lympleigh Road,
Plumstead.

I hope all the members are busy finding nests and filling in Nest Record Cards in order to reach a total of 1000 or more this year.

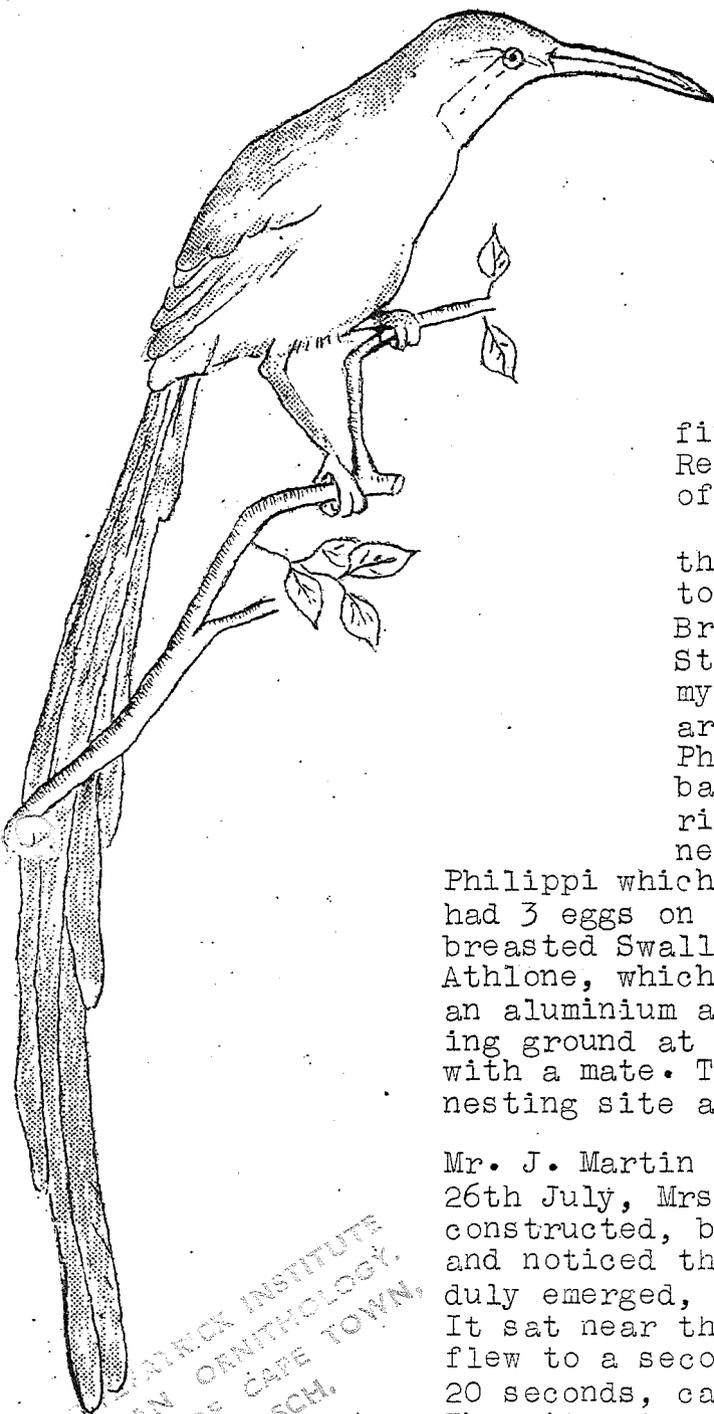
No records of early breeding or the arrival of migrants have been sent to the recorders, Mr. Martin and Dr. Broekhuysen. I find that the Larger Striped Swallows were late this year; my first records at the nesting sites are at Plumstead on Sept. 4, and at Philippi on Sept. 5, they are usually back at the end of August. Two of my ringed pairs have returned to the same nest, and the one pair in a nest at Philippi which I fitted with an observation hole, had 3 eggs on Sept. 29. My old friend, the Pearl-breasted Swallow male from Doornhoogte Plaas, Athlone, which was ringed on 9th January 1958 with an aluminium and a red ring, was back at his feeding ground at Philippi on August 30 and Sept. 2 with a mate. They did, however, not return to their nesting site and I have not seen them anymore.

Mr. J. Martin reports: While out at Klipheuvel, 26th July, Mrs. Davidson and I came upon 3 newly-constructed, but unfeathered Cape Weaver nests and noticed that one of them was occupied. A bird duly emerged, and we saw that it was a Pied Barbet. It sat near the nests for a short while and then flew to a second nest, stayed in the nest for 15 - 20 seconds, came out and again perched nearby. Then it entered the third nest where it remained for about the same time, once again coming out to perch close-by for a short while. This it continued to do for about 10 minutes, entering each nest in turn. When we tired of watching this performance and started to leave, it flew to a dead tree across the river.

The tireless work of Mr. R. Liversidge, our former Club Secretary, still bears fruit here in Cape Town. On 26 November 1955 he ringed a Cape Robin chick in the nest at Newlands with an aluminium ring 502/05282 and a blue ring. This bird flew into Mr. Buchanan's house in Aliwal Road, Wynberg, on 19 August 1959. In those four years the bird has not moved very much. It was ringed in a garden on the mountain side of Newlands Avenue. Mr. Liversidge thinks that 4 years of rushing, throbbing city life are not bad for a bird. (According to David Lack: The Life of the Robin, the Oldest European Robin so far recorded was at least eleven years old). The above mentioned Cape Robin was released unhurt, so that we may hear more about it.

On the 1st of May 1955, I ringed an adult Larger Stripe-breasted Swallow with ring 50-784 at Plumstead. On the 17th of October this bird was mortally wounded in a fight with a nesting pair at Southfield about 1 mile from the spot where it was originally ringed. This swallow was, therefore, at least five years old.

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OF AFRICAN ORNITHOLOGY,
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Miss R. Henshilwood reports a most unusual observation which she made at Knysna on 31 July 1959. She saw 4 Ostriches swimming across the lagoon, apparently for the pleasure of it. They looked almost like swans, just the long neck and head showing above the water. When they landed on an island to rest, they did not have their feathers limp as one would have expected, instead they seemed fluffed out. From a distance they all appeared to be males.

I heard from Dr. Winterbottom that Dr. H. Kumerloeve of Bonn (Germany) who is on a visit to South Africa and is an authority on the birds of the Middle East, saw a single Pratincole (no doubt the Black-winged) near Brandvlei, Worcester, on 8th October. He also picked up on the beach at Kleinmond, the remains of a Prion, which has been identified at the South African Museum as the Dove Prion, *Pachyptila desolata*.

In July 1959 Dr. Winterbottom found a colony of Avocets nesting at Pools, north of Piquetberg (the same place where Mrs. Taylor saw Wood Ibis last summer). There were several nests on a small island and a single one on an even smaller island nearby.

Mr. W.T. Ferguson and Mr. T.P. Pottinger went bird-watching to Langebaan and the Lower Berg-River (Kersefontein) between 22 and 25 September. At Langebaan they found a pair of Banded Sand-Martin apparently nesting in a shallow quarry within 200 yards of the Panoramic Hotel. A pair of Bee-eaters were also taking an interest in this quarry. They were struck by the considerable number of White-breasted Swallows, Whiterumped Swifts and particularly Larger Stripe-breasted Swallows they saw in those areas.

In terms of distribution the following seemed of special interest:

- 1) a Pied Barbet at the roadside about a mile on the Hopefield side of Kersefontein,
- 2) a pair of Masked Weaver nesting in a clump of trees several miles north of the Berg River at Kersefontein, and another pair in a large clump of bamboos at Kersefontein.

Master Andrew Rowan, one of our junior members, noticed a pair of Pied Wagtails at a pool on a farm at Richmond in the Karoo in July 1959. This is far south of the Orange River where they usually occur.

Mr. Terry Jones, who resides in England, spent some time in South Africa last year and went out with the Cape Bird Club on one or two occasions. He extends an invitation to all members of our Society, when visiting England, to call on him and he promises to show them plenty of birds. His address is:

Mr. Terry Jones, Leckford Abbas,
Stockbridge, Hampshire, England.

Bird Ringing: According to new instructions of Dr. McLachlan rings can be obtained only from the club's Ringing Organiser who gets them from Dr. MacLachlan. Cape Bird Club members should send their Ringing Record Sheets in triplet to Dr. Broekhuysen who will send two on to Dr. MacLachlan and keep one copy as a local record for the Cape Bird Club.

Only members having permits are allowed to ring birds. Members who wish to apply for ringing permits should submit their applications to the Hon. Secretary, Dr. Uys, for approval by the Committee who will then forward them to the Department of Agriculture.

Mr. Middlemiss of Rondevlei reports that the Barberspan Bird Sanctuary in the Western Transvaal has made its first reciprocal gesture in the form of a banded bird. This occurred when a coot, banded in the Transvaal Sanctuary turned up in the Rondevlei Bird Sanctuary in early October and obligingly entered a trap. This now establishes a two-way exchange as a pair of redbill teal, banded at Rondevlei, have visited the Barberspan traps.

Recoveries of banded coot are not abundant, but a few from those banded at Rondevlei suggest that the bird is by no means a conservative and lethargic stay-at-home. Rondevlei birds have been recovered at George (about 250 miles), Bredasdorp (100 miles), two at Veld-drift (100 miles), one at Piquetberg (60 miles) and another at Cape Agulhas, the continent's tip and about 100 miles away.

Barberspan is over 600 miles from Cape Town so the recent visitor from the North no doubt had an interesting trip via the Karoo pans. As yet it is not known whether it intends returning to its place of first capture.

CENSUS OF RED BISHOP BIRDS:

The response to our request for volunteers in the last newsletter has been encouraging, but the first few surveys carried out, have shown that the task is far greater than we first thought. In order to cover colonies away from public roads we will ultimately have to enlist the help of the farmers concerned. This was anticipated and will be tackled in good time for the next season. I have been round colonies in isolated, waterlogged quarries where one would not normally expect them. Dr. Winterbottom has just written to say that he finds breeding "decidedly dispersed".

To cover all the odd corners we need all the help we can get. You will find a short simple questionnaire appended. Each and every one of these forms, even though partly completed is invaluable. The same information on a plain piece of paper will be equally welcome, but as many forms as you can use will be sent to you if you just apply to Mr. H.K. Morgan, 5, Arthur's Court, High Level Road, Sea Point.

Return to: Mr. H.K. Morgan,
5, Arthur's Court, High Level Rd., Sea Point.

RED BISHOP BIRD.

DETAILS OF COLONY OBSERVED:

1. Where is the colony? (Please make a rough sketch on the back of this sheet if possible)
 2. How many male birds were present?
 3. How many nests could you count? (This can be done using binoculars)
 - a) Probably occupied
 - b) Outer walls complete but not lined
 - c) Outer walls incomplete
 4. (a) What are the nests built in?(Reeds, Sedge etc.)
 - (b) Are these (i) in water?
 - (ii) alongside water?
 5. Is the colony in a river?
 - a vlei?
 - a dam?
 6. How many more slips do you want?
- Observer: Date:
- Address:
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COMPLETE LIST OF ALL BIRDS RINGED BY MEMBERS
OF THE CAPE BIRD CLUB (EXCLUDING RONDEVLEI) FROM 20 JUNE
1958 - 1 July 1959.

DUCK		SWALLOW	
Red-bill Teal	21	Larger stripe-br. Swallow	13
Wigeon	0	White throated Swallow	20
Yellow-bill Duck	9	European Swallow	358
Black Duck	0	Sand martin	13
Cape Shoveler	0	Rock martin	1
		Banded martin	2
WADERS		OTHER BIRDS	
Crowned Lapwing	1	Paradise Flycatcher	1
Blacksmith Plover	3	Prinia maculosa	3
Treble b. Sandplover	6	Cisticola textrix	3
Curlew Sandpiper	5	Grey-backed Warbler	3
Little Stint	19	European Bee-eater	22
Kittlitz Plover	4	Neddicky	3
Common Sandpiper	1	Cape White-eye	1
Marsh Sandpiper	1	Cape Wagtail	8
Ethiopian Snipe	2	Cape Sparrow	49
Cape Dikkop	4	Cape Robin	6
DOVES & PIGEONS		Bokmakierie	4
Cape Turtle Dove	66	Malachite Sunbird	1
Laughing Dove	100	Sombre Bulbul	2
		African Hoopoo	1
		European Starling	2
		Cape Cormorant	1
		Night Heron	1
		Spotted Eagle Owl	1
		Black Eagle	1
		Yellow-billed Kite	5
		Marsh Harrier	1

The total of ringed birds is 786

From Dr. Broekhuysen, who has a breeding Spotted Eagle Owl under observation at the University, comes the following observation. In the morning of 19th. October while watching the female owl sitting on the nest just behind the nearly three weeks old owlet, I noticed how, three times in fairly quick succession a male Cape Mossie approached the sitting owl and its young to collect feathers and down, presumably for its own nest. The third time the male was accompanied by the female. The male mossie at some times was not further than two feet away from the owls. The owl and the owlet did not take the slightest notice and let the mossie collect the feathers they had shed. Apparently the mossie is aware of the fact that the owl will not attack during the daytime. A Spotted Eagle Owl hunting during the dim hours of twilight would to this mossie be a deadly enemy but the same owl sitting on the ledge next to its small young during the daytime is nothing to be particularly afraid of.

Very few records of arrivals of migratory species have been reported by members. Will any one who has records of first arrivals of migratory species send the information to Dr. G.J. Broekhuysen, Dept. of Zoology, University of Cape Town.
