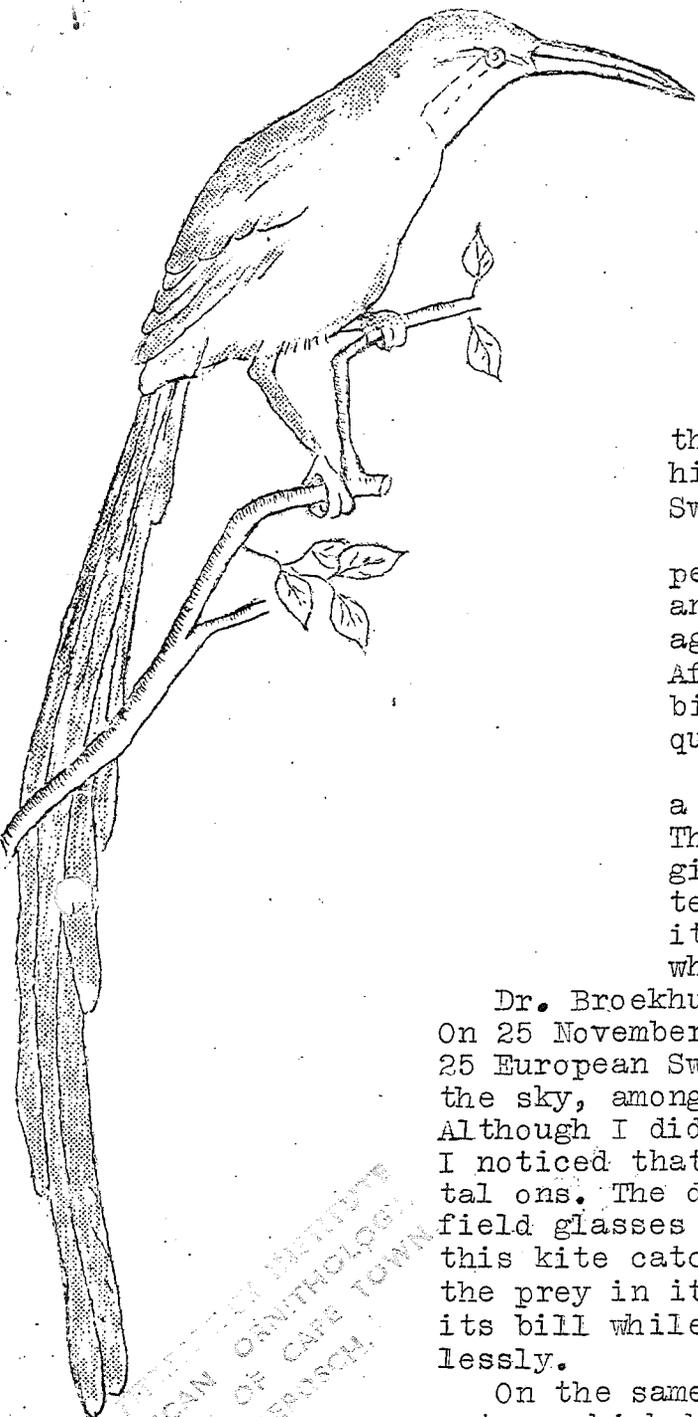


January 1960.

Editor: R.K.Schmidt,  
Striegau,  
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Plumstead.



It gives me great pleasure to report that Mr. R. Brown has been rewarded for his tireless work in ringing European Swallows:

On 24 January 1959 he ringed a European Swallow at the sewage farm at Ottery, and on 18 December 1959 he caught the bird again at the Athlone sewage farm. After going back to Europe to breed, this bird had come back to the same wintering quarters.

On 14 December 1958 Mr. Brown ringed a European Swallow at Athlone sewage farm. This bird was found dead at Mahagi, Belgian Congo (near Lake Albert) on 26 September 1959. The bird must have been on its way back to the wintering quarters when it came to grief.

Dr. Broekhuysen sent the following observation: On 25 November 1959 I was watching a group of about 25 European Swallows wheeling around fairly high in the sky, among them was a Yellow-Billed Kite. Although I did not actually see the kite catching it, I noticed that all of a sudden it held prey in its talons. The distance was a bit far but through my field glasses it definitely looked like a bird. Did this kite catch a European Swallow? Although holding the prey in its talons it manipulated the prey with its bill while soaring around in circles quite effortlessly.

On the same day I watched about 15 European Bee-eaters which had nests in the quarry just beyond Langebaan. Most of them were feeding young and among their prey I noticed 4 Cicades, 1 Painted Lady Butterfly, and 1 Lucern Butterfly.

Dr. Winterbottom reports some observations of interest from a round trip to Veldrift, Citrusdal, Ceres, Touws River and back to Cape Town from 14 to 18 December 1959.

Europeab Bee-eaters were not seen until we reached the Berg River, but were then noted in some numbers; and there were two pans full of flamingoes, waders and ducks between Berg River Station and Veldrift.

On the 15th, before proceeding via Piquetberg to Citrusdal, we went for about 18 miles north, parallel with the coast, reaching an extensive vlei with all the usual vlei birds, including a huge flock of wigeon, as well as a few pochard, about 20 maccaa and a number of eared grebes.

The highlight of the cold Bokkeveld next day was the finding of two nests of the Whiskered Tern, one with two eggs and the other with three, on a vlei some 46 miles north of Ceres. Sentinel Rock Thrushes feeding fledged young were noted on Eland's Kloof Pass.

On the 17th, we began by noting many Lesser Kestrels at the foot of the Theronsberg Pass. Near Verkeerdevlei we noted an "Augur" Buzzard; and on the vlei itself seven Spoonbills and a Wood Ibis. At Touws River, on a small vlei beside the Nougaspoot road, were two White Storks and four more Spoonbills. Finally, on the way home on the 18th, we saw a Black Eagle, flying low over the road, between Orchard and De Wet.

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During an outing to Rietvlei on 27 December, Dr. Winterbottom and his family saw 25 Shelduck, 20 Black Storks and 2 Spoonbills. Along the western shore he spotted a largish wader by itself. Closer inspection with glasses revealed long wings, projecting beyond the tail; shortish legs and beak; and pale buff throat - a pratincole; when it took to flight, it showed a white rump, very dark wings and a courser-like silhouette. Altogether they saw it three times, each time for several minutes and at close quarters.

During spring a Cape Turtle Dove built a nest in a Port Jackson tree in Dr. Winterbottom's garden. The eggs hatched, but the young came to grief before they fledged. As the tree is a favourite one with doves, he kept an eye on it thereafter and on 2 December he was mildly astonished to see a dove sitting on this old nest, for although doves sometimes come back to rear a second brood in the nest from which they have hatched one or more already, he has never known them to do so when the nest has been unsuccessful. However, in the present case closer investigation revealed that the sitter was not a Cape Turtle dove at all, but a Laughing Dove. Dr. Winterbottom has never known one dove use another's nest before, and he asks whether any body else had a like experience.

Miss H. Troughton reports having seen a Glossy Ibis at Jacobs Vlei Philippi on 27 September.

Miss Elizabeth Frere, a visitor from England, reports that she saw 6 Great White Herons scattered round a vlei at Retreat on 12 November. They were about twice the size of egrets and had long black bills.

A very interesting observation comes from Mr. Alan Monin:

On 29 December 1959 while at Olifantsbos (Cape Point Nature Reserve) I was watching a pair of Black Oystercatchers looking for a nesting site. When they approached the nest of a White-fronted Sandplover, the plover put on a really terrific and rather pathetic distraction display, lying on the abdomen and frantically flapping both wings. This did not impress the oystercatcher who after making a couple of lunges at the plover, approached the nest, seized one egg in its bill, broke it and then walked away. On examining the egg later I found that it had contained a fairly well developed embryo which the oystercatcher had partly eaten.

In three instances I have noticed that on this beach White-fronted Sandplovers have nested very close to nesting Black Oystercatchers and in all cases have put on this display when oystercatchers came into the vicinity.

Mrs. Victoria Iveson reports from Pinelands:

One morning during the second week in December I saw a Sugar Bird fly into the electric wires and balance there by hanging on to the wire with the underside of its beak, on looking closer it was seen to have only stumps of legs, no claws. By the time I had run for my glasses the bird had gone, but I wonder if it could have taught itself to alight that way because of the loss of its feet. I might add that I cannot remember ever having seen one of these birds in Pinelands before.

And just to add to Dr. Broekhuysen's notes on the behaviour of the Mossie towards the owls. Here in Pinelands, in the nest of the Spotted Eagle Owls which I have been observing for the past year, the owls occupy the top floor and the starlings live in the basement. The nest is a solid growth of pine needles, and whilst the owls have reared their young on top of this, the starlings have their nest entrance underneath. They were feeding their young just after the owls had left the nest, so they must have both been in occupation at the same time.

Mr. H.K. Morgan, 5 Arthur's Crt, High Level Rd. Sea Point, has asked me to remind members to send in records of Red Bishop Bird Colonies for the census (cf. News Letters No. 53 and 54, August 1959)

Finally I should like to thank those members who have contributed to the News Letter in 1959, and I wish all members good birding in 1960.