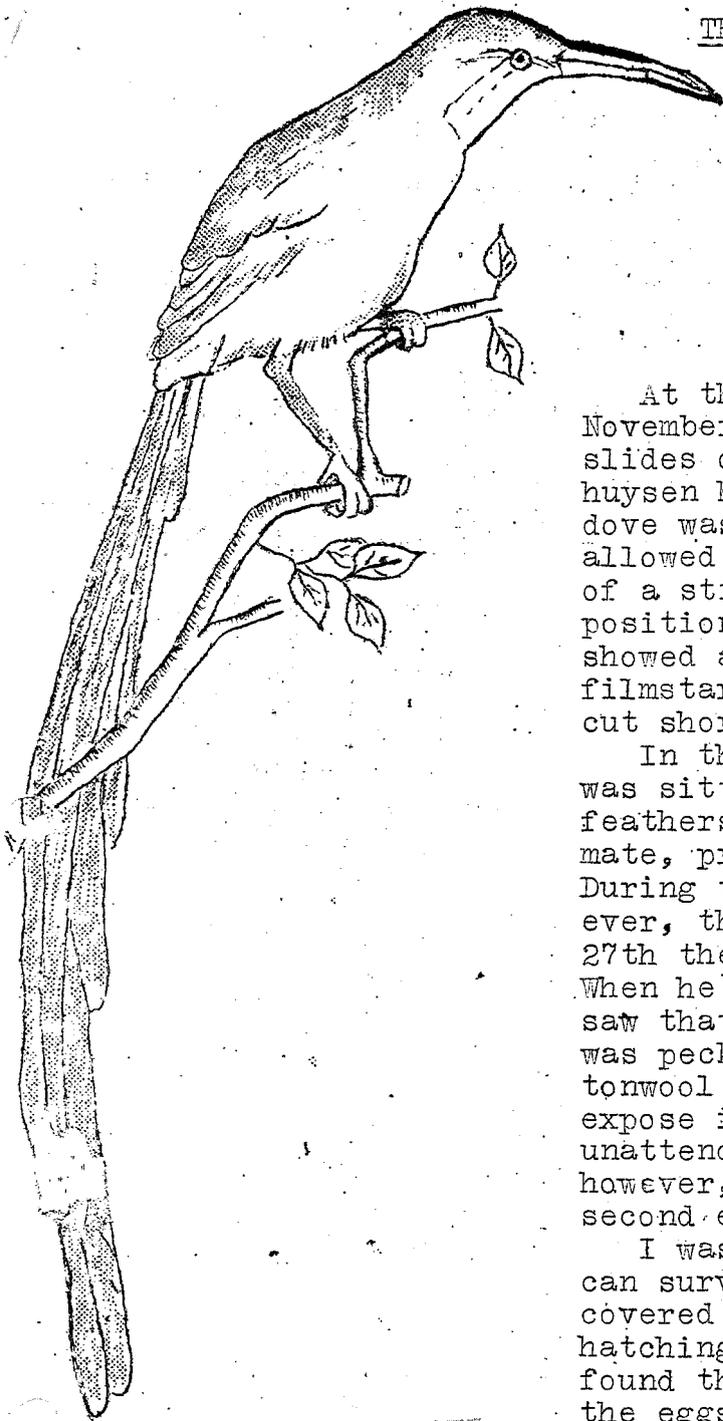


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At the Bird Club Meeting on Friday, 25th November, many members saw the colour slides of a Turtle Dove which Dr. Broekhuysen had photographed in my garden. This dove was an exceedingly tame bird, it allowed itself to be moved, with the aid of a stick, into the most favourable position for the photographer and thus showed all the qualities to make it a filmstar. Its career was unfortunately cut short, presumably by a cat.

In the morning of 26th Nov. this dove was sitting on the nest without its tail-feathers. It later left the nest, and its mate, presumably the male, took over. During the night from 26th to 27th, however, the eggs remained uncovered. On 27th the male was again sitting all day. When he left the nest on that evening I saw that one egg was chipped and the young was pecking vigorously. I put it in cottonwool on a hot-water bottle, not to expose it to another cool night in the unattended nest. The next morning it had, however, not hatched and was dead. The second egg was addled.

I was surprised to see that an embryo can survive although the egg has been uncovered for a whole night just before hatching day. Mrs. Taylor told me that she found that a Laughing Dove did not sit on the eggs during one night and that the eggs still hatched. Are there any more such records? Miss C. Robinson states that her pair of Laughing Doves never left the nest unattended, except when a bird was startled off (cf. The Ostrich, April 1956).

I read that one of the 3 eggs of a European Oystercatcher still hatched after it had been washed out of the nest by an exceptionally high tide and had been exposed for 19 hours and a half. (Karl Sartorius, Der Austernfischer).

Mr. Peter Steyn reports some very interesting observations: While at Kersefontein on the Berg River over the weekend 12/13 November I had an excellent view of how young Kittlitz's Sandpipers spend the night. On the ground of a dry pan we saw a Kittlitz in a crouching position; on closer inspection we noticed a pair of legs whose toes just reached the ground, protruding from under each of the Kittlitz's wings. The bird left the chicks when we approached, but as soon as we had moved on about 50 yards she returned and tucked one chick under each wing again.

On the 6th November while Joe Brooks and a friend were

were canoeing down De Hoop Vlei at Bredasdorp measuring eggs in some of the innumerable Coot nests, they noticed that they were being followed by a Raven. The wily bird waited until they were too far away to stop him, yet close enough to keep the coot from its nest, before swooping down and removing an egg. The irate Coot discarding all fear rushed back to protect its nest, but too late! The Raven returned to do the same at other nests twice more as they moved down the vlei.

At Constantia recently I observed a Pied Crow which had three fledged young with it, flying with a Dove's egg in its beak. The egg was observed to be turned around in the beak, and in addition the bird was calling lustily as I was in its territory. After 15 minutes however, the egg was still intact, so I gave up watching. The purpose of this record is to show the delicate touch a Crow must have with its bill.

Near the farmhouse at Klaver Vlei Nico Myburgh showed me the nest of a Malachite Sunbird placed on the end of a lower lateral branch of a pine tree about $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet from the ground. The female had been killed by a stray cat while feeding the chicks. Nico then raised the nest by placing a stake under the branch. The male continued to feed the two young on his own and I photographed him as he fed frequently and conscientiously. He became so absorbed in his unusual responsibility that he continued feeding the chicks for at least three weeks to a month after they had left the nest, by which time his plumage was beginning to deteriorate from the overwork.

At Klaver Vlei I have been observing a Secretary Bird's nest since August, and Nico Myburgh has been adding to my records from time to time. On the 19th November he told me of the most remarkable occurrence which had taken place on the morning of that day.

While he was working in the lands near the Secretary Bird's nest he observed the bird stamping on something which appeared to be a bird. Then a furious pair of Jackal Buzzards began to dive-bomb the Secretary Bird which defended itself by leaning backwards and raking the air with its feet. At this stage Nico thought it wise to intervene so he ran forward. On reaching the spot he found the Secretary Bird sitting on its haunches, its feathers all awry and completely exhausted, next to it lay the young Jackal Buzzard on its back with talons at the ready! He was able to grasp both birds behind the wings and hold them until they had regained their breath and a little of their composure. He then threw the young Buzzard into the air and it flew off rather shakily to join its parents. Then he released the Secretary Bird which stalked off and remained standing under a pine tree for a long while.

Although Nico and I were never able to locate the Jackal Buzzards nest we are fairly certain that it was on a hill adjacent to the Secretary Bird's nest. Once before the Buzzards had been observed to attack the Secretary Bird so there was obviously a certain amount of territorial friction even before this encounter. There remains only one unsolved problem: How did the Secretary Bird manage to pin down the young Buzzard in the first place? At the time of the incident it was able to fly quite competently.

On Monday the 5th of December Mr. Myburgh told Dr. Broekhuysen that both the young Jackal Buzzard and the Secretary Bird had eventually died. The dead Jackal Buzzard he had found, but the Secretary Bird not, but only one Secretary Bird was attending the young in the nest. Early in the morning of the 3rd, there were still two young Secretary Birds in the nest but later in the morning one of the young was found battered to death lying in the nest while the other young was unharmed. Presumably the Jackal Buzzards were responsible although this was not actually seen to be the case.

Dr. Broekhuysen reports about the Whiskered Terns which were seen at Klaver Vlei during the Bird Club outing on 15th October:

On November 19th at least 3 young had hatched in one nest. Some nests were unfortunately destroyed by the very strong South-Easter

South-easter on November 20th. On 30th November there were, however, 8 new nests some containing eggs.

The outing to the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve, Olifantsbos-section, on Saturday, 10th December, was very successful.

I went to the area on Saturday morning and found 2 nests of the Black Oystercatcher containing 2 eggs each as well as a nest of the White-fronted Sandplover with 2 eggs.

In the afternoon 15 cars with about 30 to 40 members turned up and started to comb the beach. Some of our junior members showed themselves to be very efficient nest-finders. David Muller found 2 nests of the White-fronted Sandplover containing 2 eggs each. John Moore found 2 Oystercatcher nests with 2 eggs each and Jeremy Moore one Sandplover nest with 2 eggs. Mr. E. Ashforth also found a Sandplover nest with 2 eggs. One of the Oystercatcher nests discovered in the afternoon was only 52 paces away from the Oystercatcher nest which I found in the morning. A Sandplover nest was only 13 paces away from an Oystercatcher nest.

This area seems to be very rich in bird-life at this season. Apart from the breeding birds we saw Cormorants, Gulls, several species of Terns (Swift Tern and Sandwich Tern among them), Whimbrels and other European waders.

We are grateful to Mr. E. Middlemiss and the Divisional Council of the Cape for inviting the Bird Club to Olifantsbos where we spent a most enjoyable afternoon.

It seems to me to be an indication of the drought conditions existing in our area that I saw 23 Blacksmith Plovers at a small permanent vlei at Philippi on 12th December. I remember having seen such flocks only in February, e.g. 39 Blacksmith Plovers on 11th February 1956 at the same vlei.

Other birds seen to be unaffected by the dry weather. A pair of Paradise Flycatchers at Doornhoogte Plaas, Athlone, whose 3 young flew for the first time on 17th November, started building a new nest on 4th December although they were still feeding their young. Since the 9th December they are incubating the 2 eggs of the second brood.

The pair of fieldglasses left behind at Bonte Berg have still not been claimed. Will the owner please contact Mrs. Broekhuysen, so that they can be returned.

Please send in your observations for the next News Letter.

I want to thank all those members who contributed to the News Letter in 1960. I wish everybody a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and successful bird-watching in 1961.

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