



# NEWSLETTER - NUUSBRIEF

NR. NR.

73

January 1964 Januarie

---

On 22nd December a group of members went on a ringing expedition to Schaapen Eiland, just opposite Langebaan. The little island was teeming with young Black-backed Gulls in all stages of development; a few gulls were still sitting on eggs. There were also many nesting Cormorants and Sacred Ibis as well as quite a number of wild white rabbits bolting about among the birds and their catchers. It was quite a successful outing as about 600 young gulls and many ibis were ringed.

### Look out for dead Terns.

On 12 December Mr. Jack MacLeod picked up 47 dead terns on the beach midway between the Lourens and Eerste Rivers. They were in three lots, first 27 birds in a distance of 50 yards, then 200 yds farther on another 10, then some distance away 9 and a singleton nearer the mouth of the river. The birds appeared to have died at sea as they had been washed up and were found at the edge of the high water mark. He wonders whether this is a recurrence of the disease which killed so many of these birds in 1961.

On 26th December I was given a ring which had been taken from a sea-bird (according to the description of the bird and the small size of the ring most probably a tern) at Llandudno on that day. The bird had been in a very weak condition, appeared to be blind and could not fly, so that it had to be destroyed. The ring bore the inscription Helsinki, Finland; I have written there for further information.

At the club outing to Strandfontein on 12 October 1963 Mrs. M. Knipe found a dead tern which had been ringed. She has just received information that this bird was an Arctic Tern, ringed as a juvenile on Norderoog, one of the North Frisian Islands, on 26 June 1963.

Instinct or intelligence?

Mr. Martin reports: Mrs. MacNicol, of Somerset West, stayed at Port Elizabeth last year and had a nest of Stripe-breasted Swallows on her porch. On arriving home one day, she found most of the nest on the ground and evidence that the fairly large young had been taken by a cat. A small ring of the tunnel, however, still remained attached to the cement roof and on this precarious portion one young swallow was perched. The tail of this young bird protruded from the original entrance of the nest and its head was visible at the broken end of the tunnel. Within a very short while the parents began closing the entrance with mud, just leaving a small opening through which the tail of the young bird stuck out, and built on another bowl to which a second entrance tunnel was added. This young bird was eventually reared.

New birds in our area.

On 22nd October 1963, Mr. Jack MacLeod, Mr. J. Martin and Dr. Uys saw an African Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus gularis*) at Reinerskraal, Bredasdorp. This bird was feeding on hairy brown caterpillars in a melkhout and was quite tame. This is a first record for our area.

On 1st December 1963 I saw 2 Little Swifts at Plumstead and on 15th December one male English or House Sparrow in the same road. After further observation I found three occupied nests of Little Swifts under the eaves of double-storied houses and noticed 6 swifts flying in a flock. In this same block of Coombe Street there are at least two pairs of House Sparrows nesting under the roofs of double-storied houses. According to the owner of the house they arrived only in 1963 and are at present busy raising their third brood. I have never noticed either Little Swifts or House Sparrows there in previous years, although I have watched swallows there for a long time.

Dr. Winterbottom reports: On 10 October my wife and I were conducting a count on Riet Vlei when she drew my attention to three strange ducks about 100 yards away. They were Knob-billed Duck, the fourth record of this species from the South West Cape.

Mr. Jack MacLeod reported a Knob-billed Duck at Klaver Vlei on 1 October and an Ant-eating Chat there on 30 September; these are new records for the Hottentots Holland.

On the morning of 13 October, Dr. Winterbottom was astonished to find at Rosebank, near the University School of Music, a Brown-hooded Kingfisher. This bird has not previously been reported west of Stormsvlei and Robertson.

While making a routine count at Riet Vlei on 13 November, Dr. Winterbottom identified a Great White Egret (or Great White Heron). It was standing near Grey Herons and Little Egrets, enabling its size to be checked as well as points of difference from the Yellow-billed Egret.

Mrs. Rowan writes: The new Check List for the South Western Cape remarks that the Black Cuckoo is a rare straggler to this area, recorded from Retreat and Stellenbosch. In fact, I wonder whether it is not becoming something more than a mere vagrant - whether it is perhaps one of those birds which have steadily been extending their range south and west into the winter rainfall regions in recent years. You may remember that the late Dr. Gill drew attention to this movement in the Bokmakierie in 1952, citing the Red-eyed Dove and Burchell's Coucal as two of several examples.

Reverting to the Cuckoo. I think Miss Johns was one of the first people to mention that its plaintive call could sometimes be heard at Kirstenbosch. Last summer, when Richard Liversidge was staying in Bishopscourt he heard it calling several times from a dense belt of trees on the Liesbeek River but, despite some hours of chasing and watching, he failed to catch a glimpse of the bird. All through this spring its mournful notes, "whoo, whee" or "whoo, whoo, whee", have been heard in Upper Claremont, Bishopscourt and Kirstenbosch areas - and now, at long last, the bird has been seen. On November 24 Mrs G. Knock told me that a few days previously she had a clear view of it while it called from the leafless branch of a tree at her home, Klein Bosheuvel, Klansens Road, near Kirstenbosch.

I would suggest that Club Members keep an eye and ear open for the Black Cuckoo in summers to come and try to establish whether the bird is in fact a new summer resident in the area.

Mrs. Bean, nature study lecturer at Kirstenbosch, heard the Black Cuckoo at Protea Village near Kirstenbosch on 9 December.

#### Flamingo outing.

It is regretted that the promised outing to see the Flamingoes breeding near De Hoop, Bredasdorp, cannot be undertaken. Some committee members with Dr. Uys as guide went to the spot on 24 November, but instead of a flourishing colony they found only a few nests with several young hatched already. Even these few chicks seemed to be doomed, as a predator (most probably a Water Mongoose) had killed 16 already, there were only 11 live chicks on 24 Nov. Fortunately, as the local farmer reported, the predator did not return so that quite a number of young survived. But as they are out in the vlei, together with a few adult flamingoes, it does not seem worthwhile to go 320 miles to see them from afar.

#### What is on in the Bird World?

The Director of the Percy FitzPatrick Institute, University of Cape Town, has offered to display our Programme Card as well as topical news concerning items of ornithological interest on the Notice Board of the Institute.

Pan-African Ornithological Congress.

The Council of the South African Ornithological Society would like to remind Members that it is time to make plans for attending the Pan-African Ornithological Congress in Pietermaritzburg, 21 - 25 September 1964.

This is your chance to meet and hear distinguished ornithologists from overseas as well as from Africa. Among those expected to attend are Dr. James P. Chapin (Author of Birds of the Belgian Congo), Mr. R. Moreau (President of British Ornithological Union), Prof. V.C. Wynne Edwards (Author of Animal Dispersion in relation to Social Behaviour), Dr. S. Dillon Ripley (President of International Committee for Bird Preservation), Mr. J. Delacour (Past President of I.C.B.P., Author of Wildfowl of the World), Prof. C.S. Sibley, Mr. Jean Dorst, Prof. Kluyver and Prof. Voous. Now is your chance.

Excursions will be run before and after the Congress to Zululand and the Drakensberg. Full details from the Hon. Secretary, S.A. Ornithological Society, c/o FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch, C.P.

Cattle Egrets with Red Rings.

The Department of Nature Conservation has marked a large number of juvenile Cattle Egrets with red leg-bands. Would members please look out for these marked birds and report sightings to the Senior Officer, Division of Fauna and Flora, Private Bag 14, Stellenbosch. Tel. 3016.

A Gannet ringed as an adult on Malgas Island on 20 February 1951, was found dead at Melkbosch Strand on 14 March 1960 by Mr. J. Esterhuizen. This bird must have reached an age of at least 10 years.

It may be of interest to mention that a European Oystercatcher was found breeding on the island of Mellum (south of Heligoland) in Juli 1961. This bird had been ringed as a juvenile on the same island in June 1927, 34 years ago. (cf. Die Vogelwarte, May 1162).

'n Voëlparadys langs die Weskus.

Mev. K.L. Rode skryf: Op 26 Oktober het ek en Mej. Gillingham van Somerset Wes na Saldanhabaai gery. Gedurende ons ontbyt onder die brug by Klipheuwel het ons so eet-eet 'n stuk of twaalf verskillende soorte voëls waargeneem. Vlak voor ons was daar 'n groenpoot-ruiter bedrywig in die plassies water in die rivier en swaeltjies en windswaels het heen en weer onder die brug deurgedui. Ons het begin aanteken en was verwonderd hoe gou ons lys al langer geword het.

Die volgende oggend het ons by Lawrence Green se gelief-

koosde Weskus-inhamme gaan inloer en op Columbine ons verheug oor die swart oestervangers, steenlopers en meeus wat so ongeerg daar voor ons hul eie gang gegaan het, die steenlopers druk besig tussen die seegras, wonderlik gekamoe-fleer. Ons het gemeen oestervangers is skaam voëls, maar nie daardie op Columbine nie. Hulle het ons toegelaat om daar piekniek te hou en selfs naby hulle te swem.

Toe ons middagete by Laaiplek op die rivierwal langs die bloekoms geniet het, was daar 'n pragtige paar pelikane wat vir ons kom spog het met hul grasiëuse swewe al langs die rivier af - ek sou skat 'n anderhalf myl in een skuif - en toe netjies neergestryk het om verder soos dik balies op die water te dryf.

Toe ons uiteindelik laatmiddag huis toe moes ry, was 'n volstruis die 42ste soort soël op ons lys. 'n Ware voël-paradys is daardie hele geweste, en so'n uitstappie is beslis die moeite werd!

Dr. J.E. Nel het naby Bloubergstrand 'n Janfrederik-nes gevind wat op 17 Sept. en 28 Sept. twee eiers bevat het. Op 6 Oktober was die nessesie leeg. Hy skryf: Dit wil voorkom asof dit die werk van streepmuise is. Die binneste voering van die nes is as dak gebruik, terwyl 'n ander voering van wollerige saadjies binne in geplaas is. In 'n ou nes van 'n Kaapse Tiptol of 'n Janfrederik is daar 'n klomp Streepmuiskleintjies gevind wat seker maar net 'n paar dae oud was, hul ogies was nog toe. Naby Durbanville is 'n Hamerkopnes in die mik van 'n Polulierboom gevind. Aangesien die nesopening nie bereikbaar was nie, is 'n klein opening van agter deur die nes gemaak. Die nes het 5 eiers bevat. Ses dae later (op 26 Oktober) is die Hamerkopnes weer ondersoek. Die gat wat ek gemaak het, is deeglik van binne af met modder toegestop. Die voëls het seker 'n trek deur die nes gevoel of dalk nog lig sien deurkom.

#### A clever cat.

Mr. Bernard Carp of Hout Bay writes: It happened that two Cape Laughing Doves were feeding on a raised part of the terrace where we were having tea. Our ginger cat stalked them rather cunningly by staying below a stone wall unseen by the doves. I never thought the cat had a chance to catch a dove, as it first had to jump over the stone wall and then would have been seen at once. The cat must have listened very carefully to know how near the edge of the wall the doves were, for all of a sudden she jumped and caught a dove.

#### Gulls attacking model plane.

Mr. Alan Morris visited Zandvlei on 7 September where a model aircraft enthusiast was flying a remote-controlled model plane. This was a rather noisy one and after a few minutes two Black-backed Gulls came along to investigate.

Clearly they did not approve of it invading their Vlei and mobbed it vigorously, only giving up after the plane had landed. Even twentieth-century predators are best dealt with in the time honoured way!

Who will help to fill the gaps?

Dr. Winterbottom writes:

In a previous News Sheet, I referred to the newly begun system of tabulating Club distributional records by Districts by months; and mentioned one or two conclusions and queries that had arisen.

It would clearly be quite impossible to reproduce all the forms here but as an example, I attach the form for the Bar-throated Apalis, a common and widely distributed species, though not so much so as the Turtle Dove or the Cape Robin, for instance.

An "x" indicates that it has been recorded in that District that month on a field card in our files. You will notice that it has been recorded from every District; but that, although it is not known to migrate, the only Districts from which it has been recorded for every month are Bredasdorp and the Peninsula; and that from Ceres and Vanrhynsdorp it has only been recorded for one month. This is undoubtedly due to lack of cards - and, for Ceres, to the small part of the District (only the Agter Witzenberg) that falls into our area. But while Vanrhynsdorp and the Agter Witzenberg are remote and seldom visited, what are we to make of the recorded status of the bird in Paarl (only March, July and September) and Wellington (only March and October)? Even for Bellville, there are no January, March or November records; and there are 4 months for which there are no records for Hottentots Holland.

The picture for the Apalis is in no way remarkable. It could be matched for dozens of other species. Our records are more complete for the Peninsula and for Bredasdorp than for any other Districts. For the Peninsula, 96 species have been recorded for every month of the year, including migrants like the Curlew Sandpiper, Little Stint, Greenshank, European Swallow and several Terns and Swifts, but not including presumed residents like the Rock Pigeon, Spotted Eagle-Owl, Cloud Warbler, Fiscal Flycatcher, Cape Sugarbird and Chaffinch.

For Bredasdorp, 51 species have been recorded for every month, not including any known migrants; but not including either the Laughing Dove, Stonechat, Le Vaillant's Cisticola, White-eye or Black-headed Heron. Silly, isn't it?

Here is a list of the Districts and months for which we have NO CARDS WHATEVER.

SPECIES: Bar-throated Apalis

Month	Be	Br	Ca	Ce	Cl	H	Hh	M	Pa	Pe	Pl	R	S	T	V	We	Wo	Remarks
January		X	X	X		X		X		X			X					
February	X	X	X			X		X		X	X							
March		X	X			X	X	X	X	X			X			X		
April	X	X	X			X	X			X			X	X				
May	X	X				X	X			X			X				X	
June	X	X					X	X		X								
July	X	X				X	X	X	X	X			X	X				
August	X	X	X			X	X	X		X	X	X	X					
September	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
October	X	X	X			X	X			X		X	X			X		
November		X	X			X	X			X					X		X	
December	X	X	X			X				X	X		X	X				

Miss Barnett, of Arum Wood, Somerset West told me that she had a pair of Prinias nesting in a hedge in her garden this last spring. Wanting to prune the hedge, she waited until the young had fledged; then, getting out her cutters soon after, she checked the nest again before cutting it down, but found that it contained a second clutch of eggs.

I wish to thank all the contributors to the Newsletter and the staff of the Percy FitzPatrick Institute for their help in duplicating it. My best wishes for 1964 to all members.

