



PERCY FITZPATRICK INSTITUTE
OF AFRICAN ORNITHOLOGY.
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN,
RONDEBOSCH.

News Letter , No 38.
Editor: Miss J. Robinson, Abberton,
Timour Hall Rd., Plumstead.
Asst. Editor : Mr. R.K. Schmidt ,
Striegau , Lympleigh Rd.,
Plumstead.

My Robins about which I told you in the last letter , have successfully reared both their young , and , now nearly ten days after leaving the nest the family of four are still in the garden.

After nearly a week of rain , Sunday 12th August dawned bright and clear, soon after 9.30 twenty cars containing about seventy members lined up near Klipheuwel Station. Unfortunately the road to Badgemoor , our objective was under water , so by the kind permission of Mr. T. Wicht we went to his farm next door instead.

Our first stop was near a temporary vlei , where we saw Redbill Teal , Yellowbill Duck , Widgeon , Shoveller , Stilt and Blacksmith Plover , the latter being a new record for this area. Sand and Rock Martins skimmed around , a Blackheaded Heron flew lazily by , Mossies , Bunting , Greybacked Warblers and Thickbill Larks were seen or heard.

Going further and spreading across the veld numbers of birds were seen or heard. A pair of Treble-banded Plovers, Crowned Lapwing , Dikkops , two Nightjars , one of which flew up from right under my feet, Clapper and Redcapped Larks , Karoo Robins Fiscal Flycatchers , Scrub Warblers , a Spotted Eagle Owl , Night Heron , Hoopoe and Bokmakieries.

Four Bokmakierie nests, one with two young and the other three with two , three and four eggs respectively. Three were found by Mr. Brown and the fourth by John and Mrs. Murray. Five Fiscal Shrike's nests, two building , one with young found by Mr. Morgan, one with one egg found by Mr. Brown and the fifth with three eggs by Mrs. Knipe. Two Laughing Dove's nests each with two eggs found by Mr. Morgan and Master John Russell respectively. Two Cape Turtle Doves , one found by Mrs. Knipe , the other met with a tragedy for as I passed the tree where the nest was a dove flew out and when Mr. Morgan looked for the nest , he found that both eggs had been kicked out and broken.

The veld was lovely , starred with many flowers , Orange Gousblom , Yellow Sorrel , Pink Sundews and many others , the most striking being the tiny red flower of one of the underground parasites flowering just above the ground. Master John Russell found a Cape Robin's nest containing two eggs built right on the ground and Mr. Martin a Karoo Robin's nest with two eggs , a Malachite Sunbird's and two Fiscal Shrike's nests all under construction.

The most interesting was the Club's joint effort in finding an old Cape Bishop Birds nest being lined by a pair of Karoo Prinia , this I believe is not unusual.

A hectic week-end at L'Agulhas from 31st August to 3rd September chasing birds up hill and down dale , wading through water , lying under thick thorn bushes , in fact

infact, following into every conceivable place after the birds carrying building material or food.

However, our efforts were well rewarded , altogether 13 nests were found either with young , eggs or in the course of being built. Building seems later than usual at L'Agulhas. This year only one nest with young , that of a Cape Sugar Bird, in a wattle tree containing two very young and three nest with eggs , a Cape Robin with two eggs , Karoo Robin three eggs and a Karoo Prinia with three eggs. Prinias , White-throated Seedeater , Yellow Seedeater , Lesser double collared Sunbirds, Cape Apalis, Orange-breasted Sunbirds Weavers and others were still only building or seen carrying nesting material.

Two birds seen carrying food were the Cape Grass Bird and a Grey Tit, a Black Crow was seen sitting on her nest on the top of a telephone pole.

The migrants were beginning to return , 87 Curlew Sandpipers four Common Sandpipers and eight Little Stint were seen on a temporary Vlei.

I had one very amusing incident , whilst lying fairly hidden in a very thorny bush watching Cape Apalis and trying to locate the nest , I saw a nurse maid and her three charges approaching , the two elder children ran by without seeing me , the nurse maid spotted me and stopped dead in her tracks , called the children back to her and all gazed at me for a short time then scuttled back the way they had come looking over their shoulders to see if they were being followed. I expect I did look an old tramp , but their amazement when my sister who had noticed their fear came to call me and I rose from my thorny bed was most amusing , but even when we happened to meet them later they kept well away from us.

The following records of early arrivals of Swallows come from Mr. Schmidt , on 21st August he saw one Larger Stripe-breasted Swallow at Philippi, on 23rd August three Stripe-breasted Swallows returned to an old nest at Wetton , the owners of the house told him that for several years three have been returning to the same nest. On 23rd August he saw one Pearl-breasted Swallow at Athlone and on September 24th there were three eggs in the nest of the White-throated Swallow.

I must apologise for an error in last month's letter re Wagtail's building . 20th July should read 20th May.

I wonder if any other members have noticed the following behaviour of a pair of Fiscal Flycatchers.

A rather unusual call brought me out of our cottage at L' Agulhas and perched on the roof of the garage was a male Fiscal Flycatcher uttering this call with tail outspread and head and bill pointing upwards, as I watched the female came and alighted near him, in a few seconds he flew off still with outspread tail and uttering his cry, he alighted on a fence, again after a short time the female followed. Off he flew again with outspread tail calling as he flew and again she followed him. This performance went on for about half an hour, the amount of ground covered must have been a radius of about fifty yards or more, we had to follow their movements through our glasses, they finally came back to the cottage then disappeared, Later we saw the male by himself behaving in a normal manner but of the female there was no sign.

Was this flight an invitation to the female to build or to commence laying or what? I would like to hear if any member has an explanation to offer.

The amazing thing was that during the whole time we watched him the male never once closed his tail.

On 9th September a very enjoyable outing was held to the Eerste River, the veld still looked beautiful, the mauve Senecio making a lovely splash of colour. Wandering across the veld we saw and heard Cape Robins, Bokmakierie Khoran, Crowned Lapwing, Lesser double collared Sunbirds and a solitary Hoopoe.

A Tit Babbler's nest was found under construction, a Cape Longclaw's with one egg, a Fiscal's nest with four eggs and a second not yet completed. A Cape Apalis was seen carrying nesting material and the nest finally located.

We lunched at the side of a river opposite a high bank where Sand Martins were busy flying in and out, each time one appeared with nesting material it was mobbed by several others until either the building material was taken away or dropped in the river.

Four Common Sandpipers flew down the river, the first I have seen this season. Yellow bill duck, Shoveller, Little Grebe were seen and a Burchell's Coucal was calling in the distance. Numbers of Black Swifts flew overhead also several African Swifts, and two Sawwing Swallows. One White-throated and one Pearl Breasted Swallow were seen.

Among other nests found either just completed or still being built, were three Karoo Prinia's, one Grey-backed Warbler a Cape Robin and a Fiscal.

We were delighted to have Professor Berlioz, Director of the Natural History Museum, Paris, with us, whose interest in beetles was as great as his interest in birds, so that by the end of the day members were bringing him all kinds of beetles to look at.

Mrs. Broekhuysen has asked me to insert the following To all who contributed towards the present for Mr. Liversidge.

The total amount collected was £22 .5 .6 ; for this a set of four volumes of " The Birds of South Africa " by Starke and Sclater was bought.

Further a book was ordered for him the " Birds of the Sudan " and a pair of Stinkwood book-ends completed the present.

Whatever will be left after these things have been paid for, will go into the Ringing Fund, but, this, I think will not be more than a few shillings.

Thank you all for your co-operation.

.....00000

00000.....