

September 1958.

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This is Number 50, the first Jubilee Number, of our News Sheet. Number One was sent out in December 1951. I am sure all members will join me in expressing our thanks to Mrs. M.K. Rowan and Mr. R. Liversidge who started it. Mrs. Rowan, the first editor, kindly wrote the following message for this great occasion:

It gives me special pleasure to send greetings and congratulations to the Cape Bird Club News Letter, its readers and contributors, on this, its 50th "birthday". It is something over seven years ago since Richard Liversidge, then Club Secretary, first conceived the idea of starting a Club News Sheet, and I, newly returned from Tristan da Cunha, was invited to become its first editor. I accepted with some trepidation, as those two island years had been preceded by three in Rhodesia and one in Johannesburg, and I was out of touch with the birds and birdwatchers of the Cape.

But from the start the members of the Cape Bird Club took the News Sheet to their hearts and made it what it is to-day: a consistent and interesting record of valuable observations, with a round half-century of issues to its credit.

Most readers and contributors are, like myself, spare-time bird-watchers. Few have the opportunity to indulge in their hobby to the extent of accumulating enough data for an article, "note", or full-length paper. But nearly all have some small, but important contribution to offer, and for them the News Letter provides the ideal "medium of records". Glancing through the past 49 numbers, one may find unexpectedly revealing data on such interesting and difficult questions as mortality rates amongst eggs and nestlings, breeding behaviour and seasons, and migration and distribution.

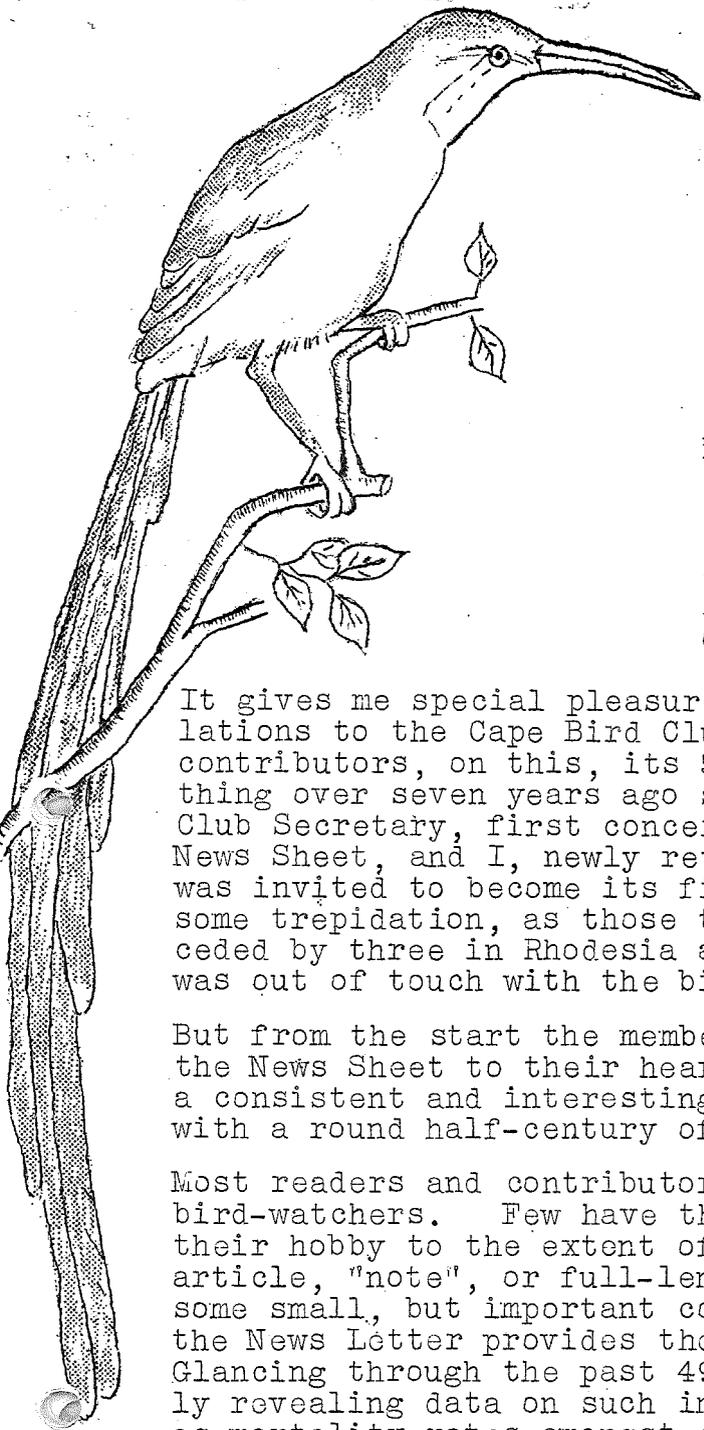
The News Letter provides, in fact, a rich fund of ornithological information. It is not merely a forum for those who share a common interest, but something more - much more, perhaps, than its contributors envisage when they write a short straightforward account of some incident that has interested them. Those important and scientifically revealing records, which might never have been put to paper, or which might have remained buried in some private notebook, are, through the News Letter, made available to ornithological research.

Despite this rather unexpected and grand achievement, the News Letter remained what it was always intended to be: a friendly, rounded publication for the exchange of bird news and views at a non-technical level. And so it may always remain for, I believe, it is this attitude, this simplicity of approach, which has ensured its success in both spheres - as a news letter and as a scientific document.

Thus, to Miss Robinson, Mr. Schmidt, and their many supporters - my warmest congratulations. May the News Letter go from strength to strength.

In addition to the birthday message Mrs. Rowan sent some interesting news which comes from Mr. Christopher Ash, chief

chemist/....



chemist to Hector Whaling Company. Mr. Ash has spent this winter whaling season at the company's station at Donkergat, Saldanha Bay, and kindly undertook to keep an eye on a fairly large colony of Cape Weavers nesting alongside the station. My interest in this colony was first roused in 1953, when Mr. Hugh Symons, then stationed at Donkergat, reported that one in every four nests contained eggs at the beginning of July, thus indicating what seemed to be an unusually early start to the breeding season (see Ostrich, 24, page 187).

This year, according to Mr. Ash, the Weavers at the Donkergat colony started building on May 24th, and new nests were still being constructed as late as August 24th, numerous families having been raised in the interim.

The appearance of breeding activity in these birds, when the days are shortening towards mid-winter, is an interesting phenomenon. In the past, I have wondered whether it could be correlated with rainfall, but this year there seems to be nothing to indicate such a correlation, as the early winter months were unusually dry. It is a problem which seems well worth critical investigation.

Another most interesting piece of news from Mr. Ash concerns the appearance of Giant Petrel at Donkergat. As you know, these birds are fairly regularly seen by our trawlers on the open sea, and it is only very rarely that an occasional one pays a visit to the inshore waters at St. Helena and Saldanha Bays, in the vicinity of the large fishing factories there. Mr. Ash says that when whaling started in March, no Giant Petrels were to be observed; but by the end of June and early July they began to appear in ever-increasing numbers all around the station. He says they come and go, and tend to be present in highest numbers when there is bad weather out at sea. They are bold, and venture within a stone's throw of the shore where the men are working on the whales. Nearly all the petrels are in the dark phase, but Mr. Ash has been particularly interested to notice a light phase bird on several occasions (perhaps the same bird each time) during the past few weeks.

Dr. Broekhuysen received most welcome news of the European Swallows caught at Athlone Sewage Farm in February/March 1958. After being ringed these birds were marked with a red spot on the chest. Two of these birds were observed at the Poultry Farm of Mr. Olaf Frich in Skjelland Andabu near the Oslo Fjord in Norway. In May one bird was noticed and later two which seemed to be a pair although their nest was not found. Their ring numbers were not taken either. As only about 120 swallows were ringed and marked at Athlone, this record is very fortunate and a quick reward for Mr. Brown who sacrificed so much of his spare time in marking these birds.

Another ringing record: Cattle Egret (C.139) ringed by Mr. A.R. Thesen and Miss P. de Wet on 29.4.51 at Zeekoe Vlei was recovered by Mr. Erasmus at Somerset East on 31.1.57. Although this ring was nearly six years old it apparently was still in very good condition. The bird was originally caught in the evening by the method of blinding with strong torches.

The first of our South African Swallows have returned:

Dr. Winterbottom saw a Larger Striped Swallow at Velddrift on August 20th and a White-throated Swallow at Kersfontein on August 21st. Dr. Broekhuysen saw a Larger Striped Swallow near Alderman's Vlei, Firgrove, on August 24th; I saw one at the Cement Factory, Philippi, on the same day. One Pearl-breasted Swallow was back at Doornhoogte, Athlone, on August 28th.

Dr. Broekhuysen wrote on July 20th: The freak spring weather which we are experiencing seems to have an influence on the birds. At the present I know of one nest of the Spotted Eagle Owl in a pine tree in the garden of Mr. and Mrs. Reed at Pinelands containing 3 young (an extraordinarily early date). This nest was located by Mrs. Iveson. There is a Bokmakierie nest containing 3 small young in a garden at Constantia reported by Mr. and Mrs. Chaundy. A

Cape Robin/....

Cape Robin has just finished its nest in the hedge of our neighbours. The Cape Thrush also seems to be in a nesting mood.

It is important to try to find out what influence freak weather has on the behaviour of our birds and here seems a very good chance to get some information. I suggest that anyone who knows of early nests sends details to the News Sheet and Mr. J. Martin, Lower Mountain Road, Somerset West, who is our recorder for nesting observations.

Dr. Winterbottom reports the same from a trip with Mr. A.N.B. Masterson to the Kamiesberg from 19th to 26th July:

On the first day travelling to the Monazite Mine, 50 miles north of Vanrhynsdorp, they saw several Thick-billed Larks carrying nesting material. At the mine, which is situated in typical Karoo veld, the only trees being a few kokerbooms on the koppies, evidence of breeding was unexpectedly frequent - nests of the Mossie and Lesser Double-collared Sunbird were found with eggs (the Mossie had a newly hatched chick too); a pair of Penduline Tits were busy building in a bush a few yards from the camp - and much appreciated the tufts of cotton-wool Masterson put on the nearby vegetation for their use; and thick-bills, rufous-eared warblers, karoo prinias, grey tits and malachite sunbirds were all seen carrying. On the other hand, the fringillids were still in flocks and the other species of larks - karoo, spike-heeled and red-capped - though showing some territorial behaviour, were not in anything like breeding condition. But Layard's Tit-babblers, which were not uncommon, will clearly be nesting soon.

We left the mine on the 24th and continued north to Kliprand, where we swung west through desolate country, bare with over-grazing, to the Kamiesberg. We camped near the top of a pass some 20 miles from Garies, in a delightful situation. These Kamiesberge are clearly an intermediate zone ecologically, for among the birds we found at this camp were: the Clapper Lark and the Cape Bishop, characteristic of the winter rainfall areas; the Pririt Batis, characteristic of the acacia belts along karoo watercourses; the Namaqua Sandgrouse, characteristic of the open karoo; and the Cinnamon-breasted Warbler, characteristic of the arid hills of Namaqualand and the northern karoo.

Next day we shifted south. At Garies, in a dense acacia belt, were Red-shouldered Glossy and Pale-winged Starlings - I had not realised that either came so far south, though I seem to remember that Messrs. Stanford and MacLeod once reported the latter from Clanwilliam District. On a small roadside pool between Bitterfontein and Nuwerust, we were surprised to see two Avocets. A few miles south of the latter place we identified an example of the white-faced subspecies of the Black-head Canary. And near Lutzville, in the Olifants valley, was a Black Harrier.

We camped, late, at the Widouw's River between Vanrhynsdorp and Klaver, as Masterson wanted to see Pririt Batises and I rashly promised him some there. Next morning, we awoke to the sound of Namaqua Prinias. The Batises did not let me down; but the Lark-like Buntings, which had been almost a pest last time I had been there, were completely absent. And so back to Cape Town, noting a flock of 13 Curlew Sandpipers at Moorreesburg as the final birds worthy of remark.

Some more about Sandpipers and Plovers from Mr. Brown:

Strandfontein Sowage Farm on 21st June 1958. At the edge of a small pan I saw our three local sandpipers. Kittlitz and Treble-banded were numerous with only one White-fronted in their midst, the latter being very aggressive for it frequently chased the other sandpipers and on one occasion grasped a Kittlitz by the shoulder and swung it violently round three times. At this

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same pan were also 4 Curlew Sandpipers, 2 Marsh Sandpipers and 1 Ruff, all in winter plumage. Feeding nearby, in a boggy area, were 33 Sacred Ibis and a single Glossy Ibis.

On 30th June, at Athlone Sewage Farm, I saw a group of 37 Curlew Sandpipers feeding in the sludge fields.

Three winter records of the Paradise Flycatcher from outside our area pose an interesting problem: Are they local resident birds or are they our summer visitors in their winter quarters?

Mr. Macleod saw them at Amanzintoti (Natal) in June.

Mr. Martin at Maidstone (North Coast, Natal) first week July.

I saw one on the bank of the Limpopo River in the northern Kruger Park on the 1st July.

Can anyone give records from other places? According to W. Hoesch in Journal fur Ornithologie 1940, they leave their breeding areas in South West Africa (Waterberg) during April.

Mr. Liversidge sent out News Letter No. 1 of the S.A.O.S. Migration Enquiry. "The results are very interesting although perhaps not nearly as complete as we would like to see," he writes. "Slightly better results can be expected this coming season."

Below is his comment and the table of the European Swallow which was fairly well covered.

The European Swallow: There are three items worthy of notice in this species: the very early first records along the western part of the region, the early flock arrivals in the Federation, and the very much later flock arrivals in the Cape. It has been suggested from ringing results that different populations from different breeding areas migrate to regular areas in Africa. Do the above items support this or not?

The following table gives the arrival dates of the first European Swallow; where the first flock was recorded the date is given in brackets.

Western Province	14 Aug. (3 Nov.)	Eastern Prov.	24 Oct. (12 Nov.)
Transvaal	21 Oct.	S.W.A.	3 Sept.
S. Rhodesia	6 Sept. (12 Sept.)	Nyassa	25 Sept. (26 Sept.)
Tanganyika	20 Sept.	Kenya	22 Sept.
Congo	30 Sept.	Nigeria	22 Sept.
Ghana	11 Aug. (8 Sept.)	S. Leone	29 Sept.