

December 1958

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The European Storks are back. Dr. Broekhuysen saw 130 White Storks at Muldersvlei (on the left-hand side of the National Road to Paarl) on Saturday, 13th December. None, however, were seen at Noordhoek Vlei during the Club Outing on Saturday, 20th December. Would members seeing White Storks please report their observations to Dr. Winterbottom for the International Census (cf. News Letter No. 49).

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The ringing of European Bee-eaters, which was started last year, has been continued and 14 Bee-eaters were caught at the nesting sites along the Geelbek road. One of the Bee-eaters caught on November 30th, 1958, had been ringed at the same site on November 30th, 1957.

A very interesting report about the White-fronted Sandplover comes from Mr. Anthony Eaton:

Last year I found at least 20 nests of this species, mostly at Melkbosch, in the summer months. I noticed then that in many of the nests the eggs were embedded in the material of the nest (sand, shell-fragments and occasionally twiglets) to varying degrees. Dad once saw one bird hastily scratching sand over the eggs before it ran away, and now we have seen this again, quite indisputably. At Melkbosch on 7th September 1958, we noticed the kicking action, and now again to-day (20th September 1958) at Blaauwberg. It seems as though the White-fronted is taking over the habits of the Kittlitz Sandplover.

The new edition of Roberts states: The eggs are usually three-quarters covered with wind-blown sand on hot days, seldom on cloudy days, never at night. Dr. Broekhuysen took a film showing the White-fronted Sandplover kicking sand over the eggs, and contrary to the Kittlitz the White-fronted did so when coming back to the nest and then settled on the sand-covered eggs. Prof. Hall who is studying the Plovers, is trying to find out whether the action in this case has something to do with temperature regulation.

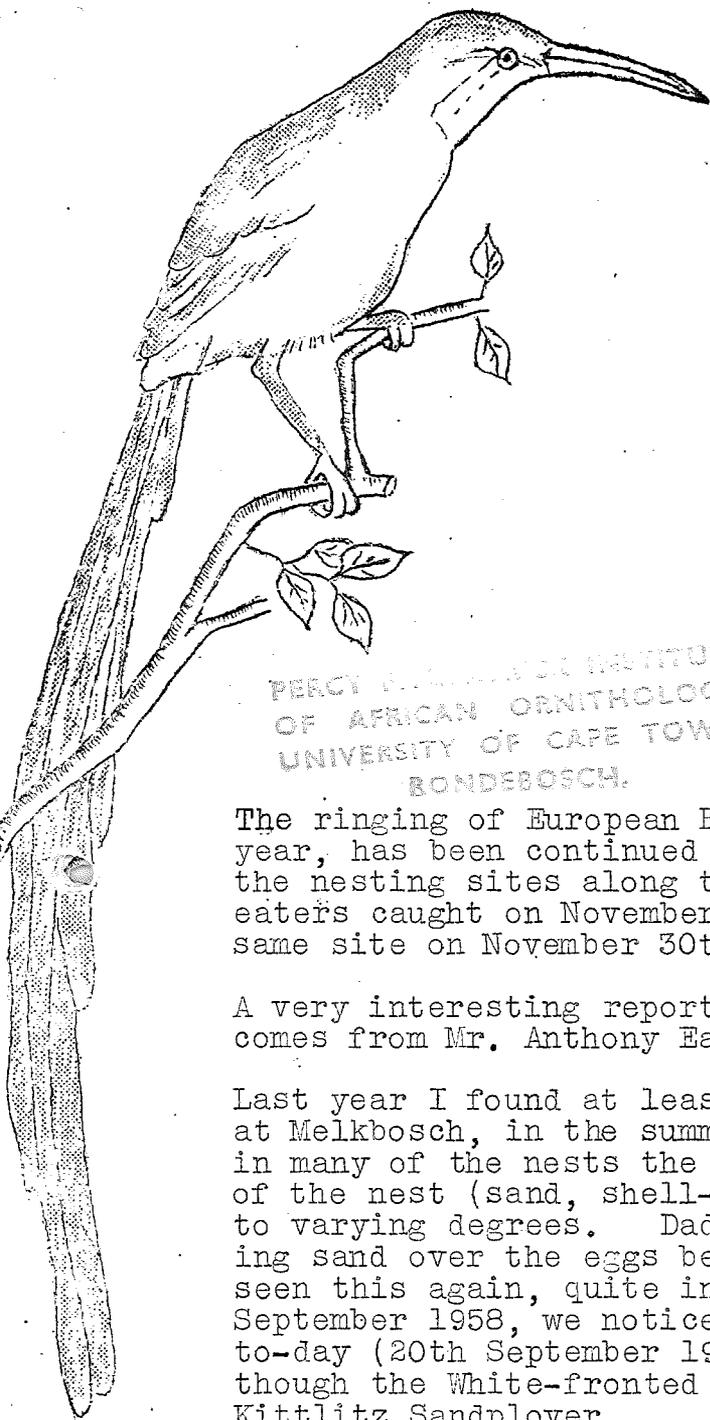
Mrs. G.L.M. Todd, Pluto Road, Plumstead, reports that a white Wagtail has hatched in her garden. It left the nest on November 1st, and on November 4th it was still being fed by its parents in the vicinity. Mrs. Todd has not been able to ascertain if it is an albino as it appears to have a certain amount of grey about the head. Has anyone seen this bird? (Mrs. Todd's phone No. 7-5163).

Mr. Alan Morris writes: While having lunch at the Tulbagh Agricultural Show on 12th September I noticed a Fiscal Shrike feeding young. The nest was built in the rafters of a "Dutch" barn about 12 feet from the ground and about 1 foot from the iron roof. At the time many people were in the barn having lunch and the bird flew in and out carrying food and did not seem at all nervous.

I have checked in Roberts and Gill and can find no reference to this shrike nesting inside a building.

Has anybody else a similar record? Please report it.

Mr. Morgan/.....



Mr. Morgan saw two birds at Rietvlei which the Check List does not mention for this area: On 12th October 1958 he found four White-throated Seed-eaters between the vlei and the beach.

While doing the routine count at Rietvlei on 2nd November he encountered five Whiskered Terns in full breeding plumage.

An appeal is made to those members of the Cape Bird Club who are bird photographers. As they usually consider only the best snaps to be worth showing, they will probably have quite a number of spare slides which do not fulfil their requirements but which may still be useful. It has been decided to build up a collection of such spare slides for the Cape Bird Club to be available on loan to all members who require them for a show or lecture. Dr. Uys is willing to organise this library of slides, and the Committee asks all members to clean out their drawers and contribute their surplus slides.

Mr. E.M.S. Gill, Honorary Secretary of the Cape Town and District Avicultural Club, sent us a letter written by Mr. A.H. Lawrence concerning the English Sparrow. Mr. Lawrence wrote on September 12th, 1958: I had occasion to visit the small Karroo town of Fraserburg a few weeks ago, and to my surprise I heard one morning the peculiar chirp of an English Sparrow. I located the bird and found several English Sparrows perched on a poplar tree. I have seen English Sparrows in Durban, but never expected them in Fraserburg. These birds usually adopt a flat posture with the belly close to the ground; the Cape Sparrow (Mossie) stands straight up.

This is a report from outside our area, but if these English Sparrows, probably escaped from an aviary, have established themselves at Fraserburg, they may one day spread to our area. So, members, look out.

Mrs. Taylor saw 2 Black Crows on Mouille Point Golf Course on the 20th and 21st December. Any more records from other members?

Prof. Hall will soon leave the Cape as he has been appointed Professor of Psychology at the University of Bristol (England). This is a great loss to the ornithology of South Africa as he will not be able to continue his studies of the behaviour of our resident plovers.

Dr. and Mrs. Broekhuysen will also leave for Europe at the end of January 1959, but, fortunately for us, only on long leave. We wish them very happy holidays and are looking forward already to some interesting lectures about their experiences overseas.

I wish to thank all members who sent contributions to the News Letter during 1958, and I wish to appeal for more during 1959.

A Merry Xmas to everyone and all Good Wishes for the New Year.