



CAPE BIRD CLUB

MERCY FITZPATRICK INSTITUTE
OF AFRICAN ORNITHOLOGY
KAMPSEITVOELWAARNEMERS KLUB
RONDERSBOSCH

NEWSLETTER

NUUSBRIEF

No 100 NR 100

February 1972 Februarie

Our Newsletter has reached its century at last. Very few members will remember that the first number, edited by Mrs. M.K. Rowan, appeared in December 1951, and even fewer will still have a copy of this first issue. We are all greatly indebted to her for starting this venture which has given valuable information and pleasure to old as well as young birdwatchers for more than twenty years. Mrs. Rowan remained as editor until No. 21 of June 1954. Then Miss J. Robinson took over for Nos. 22 to 47; Mr. Stan Clarke was assistant editor for Nos. 25 to 32, and I helped Miss Robinson and learned from her when we together edited Nos. 33 to 47, the latter number appearing in February 1958.

I wish to apologize that the following 53 numbers took about twice as many years as the first 47, but it must be borne in mind that real news about birds in a limited area becomes scarcer as knowledge accumulates. I hope, however, that with an average of four editions per year the Newsletter will be able to continue for another twenty or more years, provided our birds will be strong enough to withstand the "progress" of the coming decades.

With great pleasure I include in this century number contributions by the previous editors, and I wish to thank heartily all those members who have contributed to the Newsletter in the past and hope that they will continue to do so.

Being a centenarian the Newsletter could do with a facelift, which would best be carried out by a young member with new ideas. I should therefore be very pleased if somebody would volunteer to take over the editorship which has given me a lot of pleasure during the years, but which I do not want to keep until I am a centenarian.

Mrs. Rowan writes:

When the Cape Bird Club Newsletter made its first tentative beginnings in 1952, I little thought it would survive 20 years to become a centenarian. But it has done and (more remarkable still) it has altered its nature very little. It remains an informal medium for the exchange of news and views between bird lovers in the cape. Now as then it sometimes records a particularly exciting or important ornithological finding,

but its main purpose is still as a sort of information exchange for the sharing of the pleasures of birdwatching. In this role it continues to serve ornithology more widely, for much that is reported has scientific value - often greater value than the contributors themselves appreciate. It provides a training ground for many budding ornithologists. Indeed, its first editor has graduated, via the Bokmakierie, to editor of *The Ostrich!*

My very best wishes to this, my own baby, on its 100th birthday!

From her present home at Fordingbridge, England, Miss Robinson writes:

Greetings and congratulations to the Cape Bird Club Newsletter on its 100th birthday, and to the editor who has done so much for it.

How many records jotted down in note books might have been lost if it were not for the Newsletter, to which we all felt we could send items however small of ornithological interest. Long may the Newsletter continue to give us interesting bird news.

I remember how hesitatingly I took over the editorship of the Newsletter, and but for the assistance first of Mr. Clarke and then of Mr. Schmidt, I would never have done so and I thank them now for all their help.

In her new home Miss Robinson is lucky to be living on the crest of a hill within the New Forest Boundary. In front she has the Forest and at the back looks down on the lovely valley of the Wiltshire Avon.

Throughout the year she hears the Barn and Little Owls in the forest, in April the Cuckoo calls and stays until July. The Greater Spotted and Green Woodpeckers are always there.

In the garden a great number of birds come to the bird table throughout the winter. Thrushes and Blackbirds, Robins, five different Tits: the Great, Long-tailed, Coal, Marsh and Blue Tit, Sparrows, Dunnocks, Chaffinches, Wrens, Tree-creepers, Nuthatches, Starlings, Wood Pigeons, Stock Doves, Greater Spotted Woodpeckers and Jays. As the bird table is just outside the window, she can observe them all without being seen.

Down in the water meadows there are Curlews, Grey Herons and Duck, flying overhead Swallows, Swifts and Kestrels. Several Swans nest along the banks of the river.

This short description will give local birdwatchers an idea of what they may see on a visit to southern England.

Mr. Clarke writes:

The 100th issue of the Newsletter readily calls for a celebration party. The editors and contributors down the century merit our praise and gratitude.

Whilst the occasion might serve to remind long standing members of their own maturing years, the Newsletter, like good wine, undoubtedly improves with age.

Check List of Birds of the South Western Cape.

Prof. Winterbottom writes: One of the objects of a regional "Check List" is to show which birds have been recorded where and, by implication, which have not; thus encouraging observers to fill the gaps. The Cape Bird Club has produced two such lists, the first in 1955, the second in 1963; and I

have a MS list which I try to keep up to date.

The total number of species in this MS list is 29 more than in the 1955 one. The district with the greatest number of species is Peninsula (i.e. Cape Town, Wynberg and Simons-town) with 288, followed by Bredasdorp (252) and Hottentots Holland (i.e. Stellenbosch and Somerset West) (245). At the other end are Ceres (only a slip of which is within our boundaries) with 89, Wellington with 154 and Vanrhynsdorp (S.W. of the Olifants River only) with 156.

The Club's boundaries have recently been extended to include that part of Montagu south of Cogman's Kloof, but only 130 species are recorded from this area so far.

If we omit water-birds, a good number of which are marine and so cannot be expected to occur in inland districts, Hottentot Holland comes into second place. Some other curious points emerge too. For instance, districts with most species have the highest percentage of raptors and the lowest of passerines.

Our increase in knowledge of our birds is shown by the fact that in 1955, 182 non-aquatic species were recorded from Bredasdorp, whereas the figure is now 222. The corresponding figures for the comparatively unknown Vanrhynsdorp are 63 and 144. These give some idea of the stimulus a "Check List" gives to our knowledge.

The present draft list covers the enlarged Club area; but this is not really responsible for the increased number of species recorded. We can, however, use it to help us to assess our needs. We want lots more information from the Agter Witzenberg of Ceres, from southern Montagu and from our part of Vanrhynsdorp. These areas, unfortunately, are all rather a long way from Cape Town and Somerset West where most of our members live; but please do your best.

Is the Lark-like Bunting a Summer Visitor?

Checking through the Field Cards, Prof. Winterbottom finds that the number of Districts from which the Lark-like Bunting has been recorded are as follows:

January	5	July	0
February	2	August	3
March	3	September	4
April	1	October	7
May	1	November	7
June	0	December	4

This suggests that the bird is a summer migrant to the South West Cape. Has anybody any confirmation?

Little Bittern at Paarl.

On 17 November '71 Prof. Siegfried observed a male Little Bittern in full breeding plumage at the Paarl Sewage Works.

According to the Check List this bird was recorded breeding at Lakeside in September 1928.

Interesting records from our area.

On 6 January '71 Messrs W. Ferguson and Pottinger had a long and close scrutiny from the car of a group of three plovers at Tamatie Vlei, Strandfontein, which they are certain

were Golden Plovers. Standing, they were exactly as pictured (winter plumage for Northern hemisphere) in Peterson's Field Guide. When they did fly, the two observers saw, in the case of one, that it did not have the black mark in the arm-pit characteristic of the Grey Plover in all plumages.

That same day they saw a Turnstone in the same area - the first time they have seen one at Strandfontein. On 28 October '70 nineteen Oystercatchers, all in one group, were seen there.

On 21 August '71 Mrs. E. Murray saw six Blue Cranes near the tannery at Wellington and on 11 February '72, she saw fourteen Grey Herons together in a reed bed on the lagoon at Hermanus.

At Cape Point Reserve (Olifantsbaai) on February 4, 16 and again on the 18th, a small party of White-throated Swallows was seen by Mr. P. Tongue, they were together with a few European Swallows. Mr. Tongue has never seen White-throated Swallows in the reserve before, and they did not appear in "The Birds of the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve" (Middlemiss 1969). At the same ~~time and~~ place, on 18 February 1972 he saw one Blacksmith Plover, also, so far as he can ascertain, not previously recorded there.

Appeal for immediate reporting of Mouse-bird nests.

Mr. Peter Frost, a research officer of the Percy Fitzpatrick Institute of African Ornithology, is doing research on mouse-birds and would be grateful to any member who finds a nest of any of our 3 species of Colies near Cape Town, for reporting it to him as quickly as possible. Phone P. Fitzpatrick Institute, 69 - 56 12.

Nature Conservation Publications.

The attention of members is drawn to the above publications which are obtainable post free from: The Controller of Stores, P.O. Box 2710, Cape Town.

Of those offered the following should be of special interest to members:

Mammals of the Cape Province. Soft cover. 70 c. 104 full-page colour illustrations, with a description of each species including diet and breeding habits.

Some protected wild flowers of the Cape Province. Bilingual edition with 244 full colour illustrations, common names and distribution. 90 c.

Waterfowl of the Cape Province, by W.R. Siegfried. 30 c. A guide for hunters and naturalists with illustrations in black and white, and colour.

Postcards of indigenous birds 1 cent each.

Greeting Cards. Bird or Veld Flower series. 25 c. per packet of 8 cards.

Camp at Bottelary 26/27th February.

Although it was held one month earlier than in 1971, most of those present had a chance of seeing a group of five Great Sandplovers, perhaps the same birds which gave us such a thrill in 1971.

No White Storks were seen this year. But following up the query about the White Stork migrating up the West Coast (cf. Newsletter 97) Mr. John Cooper reports seeing a party

Newsletter No. 100 - 5.

of 20 White Storks fly over Dassen Island on 12 March '71. Unfortunately they were heading due South, straight towards Table Mountain, and they came from the north.

Hon. Treasurer of S.A.O.S.

As the present Treasurer is unable to continue, the South African Ornithological Society would appreciate it very much if a member with the necessary experience and time would volunteer for this. Please contact the Secretary of the Society, Mr. G.D. Underhill, phone 6 - 26 98.