

CAPE BIRD CLUB : KAAPSE VOËLWAARNEMERSKLUB

# NEWSLETTER - NUUSBRIEF

No 108

N<sup>o</sup>

February 1974 Februarie

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### FUNDS FOR ORNITHOLOGICAL PROJECTS

A letter from the Secretary of the S.A. Ornithological Society has been received by the Secretary of the Cape Bird Club, which we quote in full:

"Please would you inform your Committee that the S.A. Ornithological Society has recently set up a fund to finance ornithological projects. These projects can be purely scientific or conservation orientated and applications for assistance from this fund should be made to the Council of the S.A.O.S.

### OUTENIQUA NATURALISTS CLUB

Some years ago there was a Branch of the SAOS, based on Knysna, and known as the Outeniqua Bird Club. For various reasons, not relevant to this note, this club came to an end, and was replaced by the Naturalists Club, which caters not only for Bird people, but for botanists and historians etc., as well.

Many of our members visit the Knysna district and it is felt would be happy to meet people with similar interests and a recent conversation with two Committee members of the ONC by myself (PT) demonstrated that they would be extremely welcome. Anyone therefore who would like to make contacts there should get in touch with Miss Maisie Hamer, 3 St. Georges Flats, Main Street (Phone 425). The Club also has 6 outings and 5 indoor meetings planned for 1974.

Of course, anyone from the ONC will be very welcome at any of our own meetings and excursions; the Club's NEWSLETTER and programme is to be sent to Knysna from now on, as a token of what the Left wing politicians in Europe term "solidarity".

### AN INVITATION -- OKOVANGO SAFARI

Miss I. Zammit has asked us to include the following:

TENTED Safari by 4-wheel drive, with experienced and knowledgeable guide/driver. All-inclusive charge. 4 passengers only, and two seats available for Bird- and Wildlife enthusiasts. (NO CHILDREN OR TEENAGERS.)

Scheduled for August (the best month), from Saturday the 10th to Sunday the 25th from Johannesburg.

Specially selected itinerary includes Makarikari Pan, Maun, Chief's Island trip, by dugout canoe, Moremi Savuti Channel etc.

Please contact Miss I. Zammit at 45-4301 (Office hours) or 52-3920 at other times.

NOTE: Have you paid your subscription? No comment .....

### SLIDE LIBRARY

The Keeper of the Slide Library (to give him an impressive title) Mr. Pfister acknowledges with thanks the gift of three slides of the three local Sunbirds from Mr. Ashley Hartley. All were taken at his home overlooking the bay at Fish Hoek.

EDITOR • R. K. SCHMIDT "STRIEGAU" LYMPLEIGH RD PLUMSTEAD CAPE  
REDAKTEUR • LYMPLEIGHWEG PLUMSTEAD KAAP

Gerry Broekhuysen has also made a generous gift including a good many birds not before represented in the collection. Many thanks Gerry.

Mr. Pfister also writes "It might be interesting to suggest to members that they should also send pictures taken on holidays ... e.g. Kruger Park, Rhodesia, S.W.A. etc. We could then build up a collection of these areas, so that anyone proposing a visit there could use the slides to refresh his memory and to learn some of the birds he might expect to see."

Please don't be shy about your photos. Members' night always demonstrates that we have some excellent photographers among us, and they must have a few slides they can spare!

TEAS Since everything is going up, members will be pained but probably not surprised that the charge for the post-meeting cup of tea and biscuits will have to be 10c. commencing, as those who were there will have discovered for themselves, on the first meeting on Friday February 15.

### CLUB ACTIVITIES

This is the time of the year when Club Activities are forward-looking rather than retrospective and concern the Programme for 1974, which should by now, be in all members' hands. The following notes have been compiled by Stan Clarke who, as members know is responsible for the planning and arranging of the year's meetings and excursions.

The following programme of excursions has been arranged for the current year. All can be done with a tank full of petrol, so with a little co-operation from the Middle East, we should have some pleasant times.

### FEBRUARY -- PAARL SEWAGE WORKS

This can be a rewarding though arduous venue, lots of reed-beds where we see gallinule, moorhen, crane, rail etc. Wading birds such as Ruff, snipe, Marsh- Wood- and Curlew Sandpiper are usually present. The latter birds, still in their winter plumage make identification difficult but anyone who is keen to learn should ask an expert.

### MARCH -- BOTTELARY LANGEBAAN LAGOON

At this time of the year waders congregate on the lagoon prior to migrating to Europe. Large parties of birds make a splendid sight as they wheel around over the water. Grey Plover and Curlew Sandpiper look surprisingly different in their developing breeding plumages. Terek Sandpiper are seen here regularly.

### APRIL -- TAMATIE VLEI

### MAY -- HELDERBERG NATURE RESERVE SOMERSET WEST

These two popular venues need no introduction to members!

### JUNE -- STELLENRUS

This is a new venue which Mr. Lockhart has organised for us. There should be lots of Protea, and so, lots of nesting Sugar Birds.

### AUGUST -- BONTEBERG

A hilly site past Darling where plenty of the more common Bush birds should be nesting. Black-headed Canary, Grey Tit and Grey-backed Finch-lark have been seen in this district.

### SEPTEMBER -- SALMONSDAM NATURE RESERVE

This is a delightful area, an oasis in the dry veld on the far side of Stanford. There is a good camping site, pleasant walks and a variety of bird habitats.

### OCTOBER -- BOTMAS KLOOF

Last year's trip was spoilt by rain, but the area looks so full of promise that another visit is sure to be worth while.

### OCTOBER -- RAWSONVILLE MARSHES

Another new district. Many of us have heard about this place for years, but never visited it. Nico Myburgh says he can arrange permission.

### NOVEMBER -- KALVER VLEI

A favourite venue with members for many years, so that nothing need be said.

Stan Clarke.

## MEMBERS' REPORTS

The Black Swan: Just before Christmas Mr. Kirk telephoned Alan Morris that he and Miss de Groen had seen an unmistakable Black Swan at Tamatie Vlei. Alan was naturally somewhat disbelieving, but Mr. Kirk stuck to his guns. The joint editor (PT) telephoned Prof. Siegfried who informed him that Mr. Leslie Hill of Constantia kept some exotic waterfowl and that the swan would undoubtedly have escaped from his ... I believe "herd" is the proper collective. No more was reported of it until about January 12. Ernest Middlemiss telephoned PT that he was watching a Black Swan from the window of his house at Rondevlei. PT was able to pass on the information concerning its provenance and then thought it was time that Mr. Hill was told. Mr. Hill had lost a swan, but thought it had been stolen, as he could not understand how it could have flown. It must have managed to take off and rise quite a few feet in order to get into Rondevlei ... The matter was left with Mr. Hill wondering how he would be able to get it home again!

A Gymnogene at Rondevlei: At the same time as he reported the Swan, Mr. Middlemiss also said that he was watching a Gymnogene, or Harrier Hawk (171) eating a dove: it flopped away whilst he was speaking. A few days later it was still there. This bird is rarely seen in our area and this is an interesting record.

Grey Phalaropes (271) at Tamatie Vlei: I (PT) was buying a permit to take friends to Tamatie Vlei on Thursday the 24 January, when I fell into conversation with a Mr. Goodfellow, recently here from England, where he knew Phalaropes well. He reported that there was a party of five on one of the more southerly of the big ponds at Tamatie Vlei. I went there myself the next day, but they must have moved, as the southerly ponds were swept by a strong wind, and there were very few birds of any kind on them. Other, experienced, people have also seen these birds and reported them as Red-nacked Phalaropes (272). In off-season plumage identification at a distance is very, very difficult. (See Roberts P. 186!)

Commic Tern (291/4): I camped at Hermanus caravan park on Monday January 14, and as many members will know, it overlooks the seaward end of the Lagoon. It was an overcast evening with drizzle so that it was almost impossible to identify species, but there was a very great number of Terns ... most likely Common/Arctic (291/4) ..... resting on a sandbank. I estimated the number as approaching 20 000, (I did this by counting 50, then trying to assess how many 50's were there; it came to about 400). If these are regular visitors, Hermanus Lagoon would appear to be a valuable refuge, and as such might interest the CBC's conservation people. The Caledon Divisional Council is the controlling body. I noticed that the edge of the Lagoon was bordered by about a yard of blue and grey alga, and that there was a bad smell about. If this is the beginning of serious pollution, something should be done. But how do we find out whether it is pollution or merely something seasonal? I have reported this to the Conservation subcommittee of the SAOS.

On February 17 I was at Tamatie Vlei, and here also was a very great assembly of the birds. There is an ash bank from the pumping station, by the entrance to the Works from Zeekoe Vlei, that bounds the south side of one of the ponds; it is quite long, and it was packed with birds both on the ramp, and the road on its top, for its entire length. It is always tempting to over-estimate but there could easily have been 5 000 birds. (PT).

European Golden Oriole (519): Dr. J.M. Winterbottom writes - The European Golden Oriole, though I believe it is a regular summer visitor to Somerset West, has seldom been recorded from the Cape Peninsula, so it is perhaps worth noting that on 9 December 1973 I saw one at the borders of Claremont and Newlands -- on or about 200 m. from our Chairman's house. To add to this, Mr. Schmidt was informed by Mr. B. v.d. Walt of Durbanville that a male European Golden Oriole was seen eating figs from the 11th to the 21st of January; it was also noticed by other people earlier in that month.

Cuckoos: A junior member, E. van der Merwe writes (7 January 1974) "I heard the Red-chested Cuckoo (343) on the 6th of September at 29 Lovers Walk Rondebosch. I heard the Klaas's Cuckoo (351) through the winter, and the Diederik Cuckoo (352) for the first time on the 27th October. I never hear it so early in the season as the other cuckoos.

Black Stork (79): At a point 9 km East of Riviersonderend on 31 January, I saw two Black Stork in a small roadside vlei. (PT).

## CONSERVATION

Your Committee held a special meeting on Monday January 28 for the purpose of defining its future policy towards this increasingly important matter. The first decision to be taken was, of course, whether the Committee approved or disapproved, in principle,

of the proposal that the Club should involve itself in protection and conservation matters. Whilst some members expressed doubts about the practicability of its being able to do anything, when the question was put to each member in turn, there was complete unanimity that it was our duty to do so. This is probably the most important decision taken by the Committee for many years, and those who had expressed doubts were certainly reassured when the Secretary read from the Club's Constitution a paragraph stating that the protection of birds by the encouragement and formation of reserve was one of its original objects.

The way is therefore now cleared for further moves to be made and though there are clearly a number of problems that will arise as we go forward, they will certainly be overcome. The major one is, of course finance, especially when the question of acquiring a specific reserve arises. The next stage of the discussion therefore turned on finance. Fortunately a person has appeared on the scene with a wide experience on just that subject, ... Miss Iris Zammit, a new member, who is as enthusiastic as some of the Committee about these exciting new developments. Her help and advice will be invaluable.

There was a long discussion about the implications of acquiring its own reserves. Mr. Tongue has had an interview with Mr. Steele of the Provincial Council, and has been assured of the fullest co-operation from that body. In effect he was told, you find reserves and we'll proclaim them ... a green light that was a great encouragement. There are certain legal aspects of land ownership that need to be cleared up, but that is a simple matter. The question boils down to whether the Club itself is a legal entity and thus enabled to hold land; should it not be there is always the method of forming a private limited company, which would take powers to do all things necessary. In any event, that is, at the moment, something that has not arisen.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that two other protection societies have turned their thoughts in the same direction as your Club. The Botanical Society in its December 1973 Newsletter under the heading PRIVATE NATURE RESERVES states that at its last AGM it was unanimously decided that the Society should "take up the challenge of owning and running small private reserves", whilst the December number of "African Wildlife" enclosed a questionnaire in which one of the questions was if we had more money should we use it for (several named objects), one of which was the ownership of the WLS's own reserves. This being so the question of whether we might offer to co-operate with other like-minded bodies was discussed; the outcome of the discussion was entirely in favour of such co-operation. One should note that among the patches of land offered to the Botanical Society, was one in the Tulbagh district that grew 16 species of Orchid. The thought occurred to one committee-member that if it grew orchids, it might very well grow Snipe ... a clear case for co-operation.

Having thus cleared the ground the question to be decided was .. what next? It appeared that this was a specialised branch of Club activities that might best be handled by a specialist group, so on the Chairman's suggestion a conservation sub-committee was appointed; at first this consists of Keith Morgan and Philip Tongue, with power to co-opt; the first co-option was Iris Zammit, and a meeting will have taken place by the time this newsletter is in members' hands.

It is hoped ... perhaps expected ... that members will approve of what has so far been done, and will remember that sooner or later they will be asked for more substantial support in the Club's fight for our birds.

#### The Coto Donana

In the last newsletter it was reported that 50 000 birds had been killed by pesticides. Further investigations by two Dutch scientists showed the main cause to be botulism, a bacterial poison. This infection, limited to one particular area of the marshes was not noticed at first because thousands of wildfowl die naturally each year as the swamps dry out. It was feared that the death toll would increase when migrating birds arrived from Northern Europe; however they were diverted to safe areas by detonators.

#### A FIRST CONSERVATION TARGET

##### The Black Oystercatcher (231)

This is an unobtrusive bird but who is not delighted to watch it feeding on molluscs? It opens them expertly with its peculiar wedge-shaped bill, an excellent example of special adaptation. Fortunately most rocky stretches of our coast still offer this spectacle.

But this typical African bird, occurring only from Gabon to Natal, is threatened. Not by oil, or diminishing numbers of fish, as are so many of our sea-birds, but by too many people along our sandy beaches where the oystercatcher has to go for breeding.

Prof. Hall, in his study of the bird (cf. OSTRICH Dec. 1959) could still talk of "the unfrequented stretch of coast from Olifantsbosch to the lagoon area of Die Mond" where he found 13 nests in one season. This area forms a part of the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve, and most people will consider the birds quite safe there.

Unfortunately, this is not so. The Oystercatcher breeds from November to March, when beaches are frequented even within the Reserve. The incubating bird leaves its nest whenever people approach, and will not return as quickly as the White-fronted Sandplover. The embryos may be killed by the heat of the sun if the eggs remain uncovered for long periods. During the present breeding season it was reported that a group of people even stayed overnight at this beach, keeping the Oystercatchers off their nests. The sad result is that perhaps not a single young Oystercatcher hatched in the Peninsula. Reports from beaches farther away from Cape Town are as alarming. If this disturbance of breeding continues for several years, the Black Oystercatcher will be doomed.

It should be possible to have a certain limited stretch of beach closed to the public during the breeding season, especially when this beach is inside a Nature Reserve. So let us rally in support of the Black Oystercatcher, and make him the first target of the CBC's Conservation effort. (Rudolph Schmidt)

### EAGLES

#### EAGLE DAYS.. Peter Steyn (Purnell R12,50)

It was about the middle of 1953 that I found my first ever Fish Eagle nest, near Zeekoe Vlei. A short while after this had become generally known, a young schoolboy -- Peter Steyn -- approached me and asked a lot of questions about this new find. After a long discussion it became obvious to me, a mere layman, that here was a potential specialist in the field of birds of prey. This Fish Eagle nest founded a friendship between us which exists to this day.

We had many a good day's birding together, and also, an occasional camp. One such camp, in September 1956, is indelibly imprinted on my mind. We travelled in his little Morris Minor to Potberg, in the Bredasdorp district, some hundred-odd miles from Cape Town. The expedition was to try for Vulture pictures, but at the same time to look out for any raptors. The first night was spent at Elgin, as I could only get away after work on the Friday. The following morning, up bright and early, we departed post-haste for our destination. What with a stiff North-wester behind us, and no speed restrictions, as to-day, I have never before or since, travelled so fast in a small car over such atrocious gravel roads. On arrival at Potberg, some distance from the Kloof, an improvised hide was hastily constructed, and bait (Sheep's heads) set for the Vultures, camera prepared, and then the great wait commenced. Our efforts were of no avail, for after a while, down came the rain so operations were suspended for the day. Later we climbed the Potberg, and from the shelter of a large cave watched the Vultures at their nests on kranses on the opposite side of the valley.

Nightfall found us back in camp thoroughly tired out. Peter, besides all his other attributes, is also a very good cook, and he prepared a delicious supper of fried bacon and egg sandwiches.

We retired early, hoping for a good night's rest. But this was not to be, for heavy thunderstorms broke over the camp and we were lucky not to have been washed away.

On the Sunday morning, Peter went back to his hide, while I moved out of the way, in the opposite direction to do some straight birding. However, rain soon started again, and we were both forced back to camp, sopping wet and cold, so we called it a day. No pictures, a few nests found, but both of us happy and contented at having such a carefree and casual time in the wilds. (Peter subsequently got shots of the Vultures at their nests.)

The idea behind this short note is to try to illustrate one hazard ... of which there are many ... with which a dedicated bird photographer has to contend, and a lesser enthusiast than Peter would, I am sure, have packed up years ago. In my humble opinion both the pictures and descriptive text in his recently published book are excellent. For anyone interested in Eagles, or for that matter, in birds in general, I as an ordinary amateur can strongly recommend Peter Steyn's new book, Eagle Days. No Club member should be without it. (A. R. BROWN)

### MIGRATION RECORDS 1973

Since taking over the migration records from Prof. Broekhuysen last year, it has become very obvious that the majority of CBC members are not helping with this enquiry. The vast majority of records come from two or three people, with possibly a dozen members contributing less than ten observations per year. I am sure that many more members than that could help by sending in more regular observations. This would give a much more accurate picture of arrival and departure dates etc.

In case members have forgotten the purpose of this SAOS enquiry, the following summary should jog memories. The enquiry covers all species which are seasonal migrants to our area, not just the CBC area, but the whole of Southern Africa, south of the Zambezi, so observations from holiday trips will be welcomed. The months from March to October are most important, so please send your observations for those months to:

Mr. G.H. Wilson, 5 Brentwood, Blaauwberg Road, TABLE VIEW. Cape.

Each observation should state the species, number of birds seen, date and place. From these observations it will be possible to establish dates for first arrivals, those of bulk arrivals, of departure, and records of over-wintering.

Here are some of the more interesting reports from 1973:

Common/Arctic Tern (291/4)	Last recorded 2.4.73. Strandfontein. (P.S. Lockhart) First return 12.10.73. (P.S. Lockhart)
Diederik Cuckoo (352) (This is the ONLY record I have for 1973)	Reported 27.9.73 Somerset West (P.S. Lockhart)
European Bee-eater (404)	Earliest date 14.9.73 Elands Bay (Mrs. White)
European Swallow (493)	Last recorded 27.4.73 Strandfontein (P.S. Lockhart) Winter records (2) 24.6.73 Pinelands (Waltner & Underhill) 5.8.73 Cape Point (Broekhuysen) First arrival 23.10.73 Tygerberg Zoo (Broekhuysen)
H <del>ouse</del> Martin (507)	Two records from Wellington in October (W. Pringle)
Red-chested Cuckoo (343)	Sir Lowry's Pass 9.9.73 (R. Martin)

(G.H. Wilson)

#### APPEAL FOR RECORDS OF RUFF (256)

The Western Cape Wader Study Group is doing a study of Ruffs in conjunction with the Rand Wader Group. We would be pleased to have reports of Ruff seen throughout the year. Just give us the DATE, PLACE and NUMBERS, plus if possible, the number of Male birds seen. (Males are much larger than females.) Information to be sent to:

Mr. M. Waltner, 5 Montague Way, PINELANDS 7405

#### THE FIRST YEAR OF THE NEWSLETTER

NEWSLETTER No. 107 contained some extracts from its first year. We now conclude:

No. 5 reminds one of the great reduction in suitable localities for birds that has taken place in the Cape since 1952, by the report of a single Namaqua Dove on Green Point Common. Most of the Club's younger members will have no knowledge at all of what used to be seen there before the Municipality "improved" it ... in their usual destructive way (cf. the East side of Zeekoe Vlei the environs of Lakeside etc. etc.) <sup>to</sup> In the early fifties one might find all sorts of surprises there, and even nests. By June Mrs. Rowan had to remind members that "contributions have reached a low ebb during the last month or two ... She added "For those who are wondering what to contribute the following suggestions may prove helpful: (and still, in 1973 do) "Records of rare birds or birds not usually seen in your area are welcome provided you can provide satisfactory evidence of correct identification. Send in your observations on food and feeding habits, on any form of display you may be lucky enough to witness, on the seasonal appearances and disappearances of the various birds occurring in your district. Watch for the coming of migrants, and again for their departure. Note particularly their habits in the "winter" quarters: are they gregarious? solitary? or territorial? On what do they feed and how do they roost? Any notes on aggression between birds of the same species or birds of different species are of interest. All nesting records are valuable and eagerly sought after by research workers. It is extraordinarily difficult to record songs and calls intelligibly, but this is no reason why it should not be attempted, and the ebb and flow of song in various species, during a single day, or through the seasons is wellworth attention. This list is by no means complete, but perhaps will prompt more contributions."

The Annual Congress of what we now call S<sub>2</sub>A<sub>3</sub> took place in Cape Town in July 1952, and Mrs. Rowan regretted that so few bird people were there. She went on to say something of which I think we should all like to hear more .. unless there IS something in the yet unplumbed depths of the file .. "...an account by Miss Courtenay-Latimer of a large egg which has been in her family's possession for nearly three generations. Although absolute proof is lacking, it seems highly probable that this egg was laid by the long-extinct, flightless, giant pigeon of Mauritius, known as the Dodo. If indeed it is a Dodo's egg it may well be the only one in existence .." (It is now in the East London Museum where I saw it last August - P.T.) This same (July) issue contained a report from Miss Clare Robinson of three Greater Honeyguides (440) that

had been visiting her garden at Plumstead "for some years past". There, she observed males, females and juveniles. Mrs. Rowan felt that it must be a rare visitor, as she could not recall any ever visiting her father's garden, where, like Miss Robinson's, bees had been kept for many years. The incidence of three was remarkable too, as "Skead describes the bird as of 'solitary disposition'".

Members who visit Newlands Forest will know that there are always a few Paradise Flycatchers (682) to be seen at the height of the summer. In this July issue Mr. Schmidt reported "a single male at Philippi on March 25"; he saw "no others until 14 November, and then every day until 5 December". "To judge from the records", wrote Mrs. Rowan "this is a comparatively rare visitor to the Peninsula".

In the August issue prominence was given to a CAPE TIMES report of a prosecution under the new Wild Life Protection Act, when one Gordon Kolver was fined £50 (or three months) for shooting a coot. His excuse was that he was shooting finches but succumbed to temptation. The Editor added what a pity it was that "finches" .. presumably all buntings and seed-eaters, together with starlings, mousebirds and Cape Sparrows should enjoy no protection. (Poor Mr. Kolver! He was several years too soon, because under the Nature Conservation Ordinance of 1965, as amended in 1967 and 1968, the Coot has been removed from protection .. and Colies Cape and European Starlings and Cape Sparrows are still unprotected! P.T.)

Mrs. Rowan wrote "This suggests that here is work for the Cape Bird Club, its fellow branches and the parent Society. Can we do more to publicise the fact that birds are protected? After all our prime objective is to see that the dwindling avifauna of country is preserved, rather than to punish a culprit after the birds have been destroyed". She went on to deplore the fact that several of our increasingly rare eagles were "vermin" in terms of the Act (but, happily the new Ordinances have put that right .. in terms of law at least. Enforcement is something else! P.T.)

A sighting of the Red-eyed Dove (314) was considered by Dr. Winterbottom to be sufficiently remarkable to report it.

Chaffinches were discussed in August & September. In August Dr. (then plain Mr.) Liversidge wrote "Dr. Barnard once asked me where the Chaffinch goes in winter" and asked for off-season records. Shortly afterwards Miss Darling noted two pairs in de Waal Park in December, which remained until early March 1950/51. They were seen next in October of '51 and stayed until April '52. Then Mr. Liversidge wrote again that they had appeared in July '52 in Sea Point, in full song.

The September issue had almost a full page devoted to this bird. Mr. Stanford reported that in July/August he saw 10/12 at the Zoo, 2 at Rhodes Memorial and one at Campground Road. Mr. Feely said that a pair was noted every April and May in the grounds of Bishops .. and added, sensibly, that it would be easy to overlook this bird if it were not singing. Miss Clare Robinson agreed that it was not a noticeable bird when not singing, but added that she was not able to determine from her records that it did actually stay in winter. Mr. McCausland wrote that he noticed that Chaffinches here had abandoned their English nesting habits, and built in the tops of fir trees.

Even in 1952, the Somerset West "team" was setting an example to the Peninsula. Mrs. Rowan reported "an impressive list of breeding records .. and how conspicuous it renders the complete absence of breeding records from the Peninsula proper"... Returning to the Coucal reports, in October friends of Mrs. Rowan informed her that it was common along the river in Hout Bay Valley.

In No. 11 there is an editorial concerning "current breeding mortality" which ends with the following paragraph: "One wonders whether inquisitive birdwatchers have anything to do with these tragedies. It seems possible that their interference, however careful, may cause an incubating bird to leave its nest too frequently, and without observing due precaution, so the presence of the nest is revealed to the ever-watchful predator".

Mrs. Rowan also referred to the one annual sporting event in which birds are involved without killing! ... the reporting of the first Piet-myn-Vrou and suggested that despite its ornithological inutility, that members should keep up the practice, and send in their records for 'first-heard'. (Now, 1973 members ... this is something the most insecure identifier can do!)

And this brings the first year to an end for although No. 12 was dated January 1952, it really was 1953.