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 C A P E B I R D C L U B

CAPE

K A A P S E V O E L W A A R N E M E R S K L U B

P.O. BOX 5022,
 CAPE TOWN.

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NEWSLETTER NO. 111

NUUSBRIEF

JULY 1974 JULIE

Every year the attendance of the Annual General Meeting differs unbelievably from that of lectures or slide shows. Whereas during the latter the lecture hall is often filled to capacity, we (25) less than 6% of the total membership (430) felt quite lorn and lone in the huge hall. But I still can't believe that most of our members only want to be entertained, a bird watcher should be active. And there is a possibility even for the novice to participate.

Commenting on the Nest Record Scheme (report published in this Newsletter), Prof. Winterbottom stressed the fact that it was of the utmost importance to record the nesting of the common birds as only nests of such species can be found in large numbers. So do make out a card for that Cape Sparrow (Mossie), Laughing Dove or Cape Robin nesting in your garden. A Mossie won't mind if you put your hand carefully into the entrance hole of the nest and count the eggs with your finger-tips. In open nests the number of eggs or chicks can be checked without touching which should be avoided. Remember to disturb the vegetation around the nest as little as possible. For the nest of doves a small mirror attached to a long stick is a great help and saves you the effort of climbing a tree; it can also be used for low nests in dense bushes.

HOW TO FILL IN A NEST RECORD CARD

Top space left is for your Name, right for the Name of the Bird. District: Cape Town or Malmesbury, Locality: e.g. Oranjezicht or Darling or the name of a farm. Nest site: under eaves of house, indigenous or exotic tree or bush etc. Measure the height of the nest exactly if possible, rim of nest cup or entrance hole, otherwise write: approx. 3,5 m etc. Habitat: Garden which would be Urban or Suburban. Don't forget the year, right top, Branch above it is: CBC. If you find a nest in the process of being built, you should note the date and time on ordinary paper and fill in a card only if eggs are laid. So you will have to visit the nest several times and this makes your card valuable even for a common species. Record 2 or 3 dates for building to indicate how long the bird took to complete the nest (write "B" in the Young column). If possible, record the day of the laying of the first or all eggs as well as the hatching of the chicks. Towards the end of the nestling period, rather watch from a distance whether the young have left the nest as you might chase them out prematurely. And if possible, watch and record how long the parents still feed their fledged young (there is ample space on the back of the card). One nest may require your attention for weeks. If you have a Larger Striped Swallow nest on your stoep, you can't record the laying and hatching, but you should be able to count the fledged young as they return to the nest with their parents for several nights; the young have short tails.

All these instructions are given on the card as well, so you really have no excuse for not recording one or several nests in 1974. Cards are available from Mr. G. Underhill at evening meetings.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT1973 - 1974

During the year the Committee met nine times. Eight were ordinary Committee Meetings. One was an extraordinary Committee meeting held to discuss conservation.

Attendance was 82% compared to 81% in the previous year. During the year Mr. P.P. Tongue and Miss. I. Zammit were co-opted to the Committee.

TOPICS DISCUSSED

- (a) Verloren Vlei: The Department of Nature Conservation was approached with the request to have the vlei made into a reserve. The reply was received that due to shortage of funds the Department was not in a position to make Verloren Vlei into a reserve. The Club then again approached the Department of Nature Conservation suggesting to have the vlei declared a reserve without purchasing it. We are awaiting a reply.
- (b) During the year the Club has sold books at evening meetings. This has proved fairly successful and has brought some revenue to the Club in addition to rendering a service to members by providing relevant literature.
- (c) Through Clr. Mrs. Kantey, an approach was made to the City Engineer's Department about discharge of phosphate laden water from the Athlone Sewage Works into and the excessive use of chemicals along the banks of the Black River. The reply was, the effluent and use of chemicals was well within the Government regulations.

During the year the Committee has made contact with the Director of Parks and Gardens about the proposed Raapenburg Bird Sanctuary along the Black River Highway. The Director welcomed the interest shown by the C.B.C. and will be calling on us for advice and suggestion, when the work commences.

- (d) A lot of time and thought has, this year, been devoted to Conservation. While the Committee felt that the Club should become more involved in this field, it also felt that all members should be given the opportunity of expressing their opinion.

It was, therefore, decided to send a questionnaire to all members. To date the response has been good and a preliminary analysis shows that 94% of the replies are strongly in favour that the Club becomes more involved in conservation. 5% were undecided and these were mostly new members, while 1% was against the idea.

Many areas, which members feel deserve investigation, have been submitted and these will all be discussed by the incoming Committee. To deal with conservation more effectively, a Sub-Committee was formed consisting of Mr. Keith Morgan, Mr. Philip Tongue and Miss. Zammit. This sub-committee is now known as the Cape Bird Club Conservation Group.

Already they have submitted and have had approved by the Committee a cartoon character "Van Frederick" which will be appearing on all conservation literature.

- (e) The Committee was approached in connection with disturbance to the Oystercatchers nesting at Olifantsbos by public interference. The Cape Divisional Council was approached and they have agreed to prohibit all access to this area during the breeding season.
- (f) The Club was represented at the inaugural meeting of the Council for the Habitat by Dr. Broekhuysen and Mr. Tongue.

EXCURSIONS AND EVENING MEETINGS:

During the year there have been nine evening meetings and then excursions. Attendance at all has been very good. Some evening meetings have seen virtually standing room only.

MEMBERSHIP:

This now stands at 430 as compared to 384 last year, this is a 14% increase. It is mainly due to the U.C.T. Summer School five lectures on Ornithology and to publicity in the daily press. The Committee is considering ways of increasing the Club's membership. Surely it should be possible to get an almost 100% increase. It just means that each member must bring on a new member. Let us try seriously this time.

PROJECT ORGANISERS:

TEAS The organization of this most important aspect was most efficiently carried out by Miss. N. Williams and her band of helpers.

PROGRAMME OF THE CLUB'S ACTIVITIES

Once again it was Mr. Stan Clarke who was responsible for the final arrangement and the printing. He also arranged all the permissions required for the different excursions.

FIELD CARDS

Dr. J.M. Winterbottom continued to act as organiser of this project and a report will be given by him on the achievements for the present year under consideration.

NEST CARDS

Again this year it was Mr. G. Underhill, who acted as organiser. He will present a report on the activities during the year.

MIGRATION

This was taken over by Mr. G. Wilson who will deliver his first report on it.

NEWSLETTER

This was edited jointly by Mr. R. Schmidt and Mr. P. Tongue. The Newsletter has been very prominent this year and the two co-editors are to be congratulated on their great activity.

SLIDE COLLECTION

Mr. Pfister continued to act as the librarian and will present his report. During the year the Club acquired a slide projector with the very much appreciated help from Mr. Nico Myburgh. The projector can be leased by members who borrow the Club's slides.

To end this Chairman's Report I like to thank all Committee Members for their service to the Club. From this report I think it is obvious that the Club has had an active year and4/

this is usually a reflection of its Committee.

I would also like to thank Professor John Day for once again making some of the facilities of the Department of Zoology available to the Club.

THE CHAIRMAN

G.J. BROEKHUYSEN

NEST RECORD PROJECT OF THE CAPE BIRD CLUB:

REPORT FOR 1973.

The following members contributed to the project:-

Professor G.J. Brækhuysen 8, Mrs. M.H. Broekhuysen 6,
Mr. G. Benfield 18, Dr. M.A. Connor 20, Mr. J. Cooper 7,
Mr. M.H. Currie 16, Dr. C.C.H. Elliott 2, Mr. C. Evans 2,
Mr. J.F. Harvey 1, Mr. F. Heunis 30, Mr. C.W. Heñl 15,
Dr. M.J.F. Jarvis 12, Mr. R.G. Jeffrey 4, Mrs. M. Knipe 2,
Mr. P.S. Lockhart 34, Mr. T.D. Longrigg 67, Mrs. E. Martin 180,
Mr. J. Martin 194, Mr. R. Martin 40, Mr. B. MacKenzie 4,
Mr. R. Muffett 1, Mr. N. Myburgh 44, Mr. N.G. Palmer 6,
Mr. J.S. Pringle 2, Mr. O. Schmidt 21, Mr. R.K. Schmidt 65,
Mrs. E. Smuts 15, Mr. P. Steyn 38, Mr. T.P.B. Tasker 4,
Mr. G.D. Underhill 182, Professor C.J. Uys 161, Mr. F.J. van
der Merwe 118, Mr. A.G. Williams 13, Miss. N. Williams 36,
Dr. J.M. Winterbottom 35, Mrs. M.G. Winterbottom 3.

I wish to thank all these for their contributions to the project.

In last year's report I, hopefully, set a target of 3000 cards for 1973. In actual fact, only 1001 cards, including 16 colonial, came to hand. The shortfall cannot be attributed to any failure on the part of the birds - they nested all around us. The lack of effort on our part gave such limited results. I should mention that, in 1965 when the Club had fewer emembers, there were 55 contributors compared with last year's 36.

Ten or more cards were received for each of the following species:-

Egyptian Goose	17	Cape Wagtail	24
Yellow-billed Duck	10	Tawny Pipit	24
Cape Shoveler	23	Cape Thrush	18
Black Eagle	11	Cape Robin	15
Cape Dikkop	24	Karoo Robin	26
Red-knobbed Coot	17	Cape Reed Warbler	13
White-fronted S'		Le Vaillant's	
Plover	19	Cisticola	11
Kittlitz's Sand-		Karoo Prinia	26
plover	16	Fiscal Shrike	23
Crowned Plover	35	Bokmakierie	12
Blacksmith Plover	13	Cape White-eye	13
Rock Pigeon	40	Orange Breasted	
Cape Turtle Dove	46	Sunbird	17
Laughing Dove	32	Lesser Double-c	
White-rumped Swift	12	Sunbird	14
Thick-billed Lark	13	Sugarbird	20
Cape Sparrow	43	Red-capped Lark	11
Cape Canary	17	Yellow Canary	19

Breeding by several of the more rare species of our area was recorded. A notable achievement was that of the Martin Family. They observed a nest of the Booted Eagle at Clanwilliam. An account of this event appeared in a recent issue of Bokamkierie. This will be the first card in the S.A.O.S. collection for the whole of Southern Africa. They also recorded, nesting by the Chanting Goshawk, Gabar Goshawk and the Yellow-bellied Eremomela, though these were just outside our area.

Dr. Jarvis and Mr. Currie submitted 5 cards for the Cape Vulture, the first since 1965, and also 3 for the Fish Eagle.

Professor Uys' contribution included a card for the Martial Eagle from Bredasdorp, the first ever from the Western Cape; 1 each for the Black Korhaan and Olive Woodpecker, neither of these have been recorded since 1967; and 1 each for the Clapper and the Long-billed Larks, neither of which have been recorded during the last ten years. He capped this with 4 cards for the Lark-like Bunting, giving a total of 12 for this species from our area.

Mr. T.D. Longrigg proved that travelling far into the country is quite unnecessary for nest recording. His contribution included 7 cards for the Sombre Bulbul and 1 for the Black Sawwing from Kirstenbosch. Of the former only 15 nests had previously been recorded from our area. His achievement proves that nesting depends on keen observation and intimate knowledge of the habits of each species.

Similarly, Messrs. P.S. Lockhart, F.J. van der Merwe and F. Heunis found several nests that are seldom recorded and which, no doubt, took quite a lot of time and patience to trace. I accord them a special "thank you" for their efforts.

I conclude with the standard appeal of all project organisers - more support. Will every member please make a resolution to record all nests found, and I mean ALL NESTS, no matter how common the species.

G.D. UNDERHILL

PROJECT ORGANISER;

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

CONSERVATION AT LAMBERTS BAY

In a recent newsletter (May 1974), there appears a report from Mr. E.G. Whittal on Bird Island, Lamberts Bay. He mentions the distressing oil pollution incident on the island, a matter which has been fully investigated by the S.A.O.S. Conservation Committee. Mr. Whittal goes on to comment on the new fence on the island stating that "visitors are forced to climb over the wire after speaking to the Harbourmaster in order to take photographs". He then suggests that the numbers of Black-backed Gulls be reduced to stop their predation of chicks and eggs - presumably he refers to those of cormorants and penguins.

Recent research on the predators of the Jackass Penguin (Bull. B.O.C. 1974, 94:21) shows that Black-backed Gulls only become important predators when incubating penguins are disturbed by man and are frightened off their nests. It was precisely for this reason, to combat human disturbance, that the fence was erected on the island. Available evidence indicates that the breeding success of the birds has improved markedly since the fence was erected, though the birds have been badly hit by the oil.

The S.A.O.S. Conservation Committee discussed Mr. Whittal's article. We would like to suggest that all C.B.C. members, photographers included, have a duty not to disturb breeding birds. Moreover, as comparatively well-informed people, they should set a good example to other members of the public. This is even more important now that the Club is negotiating to set up noticeboards on the island to inform the public about the birds and their conservation. We feel that fence-climbing, and other similar behaviour by photographers is both unnecessary and irresponsible. Photographers, especially club members, should be prepared to sacrifice opportunities for taking good pictures in the

interests of conservation.

S.A.O.S. Conservation Committee,
P.O. Box 3371,
CAPE TOWN.
27.6.74.

MEMBERS' REPORTS

PURPLE GALINULE PLAYING "POSSUM".

Mrs. Pippa Ventcent reports from Sedgefield:

"On 16 March a Galinule, trying to escape from our dog, went round the end of a fence protruding from the water and found itself in the territory of an aggressive coot. After a hurried exchange of unpleasantries the galinule returned to its own side of the fence, and we had recaptured our dog by that time.

However it all happened over again twenty minutes later, and again the galinule ran into trouble with the coot. This time there was a real flurry, and the galinule does not seem to have much heart for a tiff, because in no time it had just disappeared - it seemed to sink! I thought it must be hurt. Nothing but a few bubbles could be seen - the coot went round in circles for a minute and then drifted off. Meanwhile a very small hump of weed had appeared. I was beside myself with anxiety about the precious galinule and hastily waded in waist deep to see if it needed rescuing. From the shore I had seen through glasses a glint of red - nearer I could see that the galinule was there under a weed, but still I thought it might be hurt, though by then I was getting suspicious. As I got closer the hump of weed very slowly and imperceptibly sank beneath the surface again. But I could see the body of the galinule, and on reaching it gently put my hands under and raised it a little. Parting the weed that neatly crowned the galinule's head, I was met by the alert but frosty glint of the bird's eye. Foolishly I raised it further out, and that of course was not part of the galinule's way of life and it gave a lunge at me with its beak and "shoved off" hard with both long legs, and as I was not making any attempt to hold it, it was immediately free and swam away. I did get rather an unfriendly look over its shoulder.

Is this playing "possum" a habit well known for galinules?

BLACK EAGLE SIGHTINGS IN THE PENINSULA (of Newsletter 110)

Mr. M.H. Currie, Andries Venter Research Station, (private address: P.O. Box 406, Somerset West, 7130; Tel. No. 23643 S/W) writes:

A pair of Black Eagles frequent the Jonkershoek Valley and are seen at various times over the Research Station. They were disturbed in a small camp near the office block on 21 May, each was eating a freshly killed guineafowl. They were both back at the carcass remains in the morning of 22 May. One was seen in Houhoek Pass just above Botrivier on 23 April, 1974. If anyone is interested I have approx. a dozen other Black Eagle records.

This is the only report of a sighting which I have received, which seems to show that C.B.C. members do not walk along Pipe Track where I (R.K.S.) saw a pair regularly in May and June. They even fly round the cableway corner of Table Mountain and soar over Oranjezicht.

YELLOW WAGTAIL AT SOMERSET WEST

Mr John Martin reports:

"On 16 May Nico Myburgh saw a Yellow Wagtail on the Lourens River. He phoned to tell me this interesting news and Elsie and I joined him and also saw it.

This bird is extremely rare in the Hottentots Holland and as it is a migrant, one would expect it in the Summer and not at this time of the year!"

WOOD OWL IN THE CITY

Prof. Winterbottom writes:

"On 8 May one of the taxidermists at the S.A. Museum told me that an owl had taken up its day-time quarters in a tree in the Musuem grounds and asked me which species it was. I went ti have a look and was astonished to find it was a Wood Owl. It apparently comes there every day except when it is raining, and on 3 June I was able to show it to Dr. Broekhuysen, who confirmed the identification. That the Wood Owl occurs in forest on Table Mountain was well known, but its presence in the Public Gardens was quite unexpected."

EUROPEAN STARLING NUISANCE

Concern has recently been expressed by various suburban Councils about the increasing number of European Starlings. The birds make a lot of noise when they come in to roost and the droppings produced by them make an awful mess. Starlings are also reputed to chase off many of the indigenous species at feeding areas.

The Cape Nature Conservation Dept. is hoping to employ, at the end of the year, someone to do a full-time study of the population, roosting habits and possible control measures for the starling.

Meanwhile Cape Bird Club members could be of considerable help by reporting the precise locality of any European Starling roost which they know. They are also asked to keep their eyes especially open for any sign of roosts. Reports should be telephoned to the Bird Ringing Unit (Clive Elliott) (698531 Ext. 161) or written reports sent to B.R.U., U.C.T., Rondebosch, Cape.

VISITORS TO A BERGVLIET GARDEN

Mr. J.F. Harvey writes:

"We are on the border of Bergvliet Farm and with some encouragement we have several visitors. Villain of the piece is the Giant Kingfisher - food goldfish. We were forced to use wire netting. Burchell's Coucal is also in the area and was heard during the recent rainy period (May 1974), a pair of Hoopoes are occasional visitors. White-backed Mousebirds enjoy the wild bramble berries and are also partial to willow leaves. It is encouraging that in spite of a freeway not far away, these birds are continuing to survive.

(In my garden in Tanboers Kloof I have up to ten Speckled Mousebirds regularly feeding in the berry bushes; I have seen White-backed Mousebirds, one or two at a time, only twice in April and June, so they seem to favour a different diet. (Editor)

WATERFOWL ON BOT RIVER LAGOON

Mr. Arthur G. Gregory, 1606 Silverstream, Disa Park, Vredehoek, Cape Town. 8001, submitted the following valuable report:

During the latter half of 1973 I conducted a monthly count of the waterfowl on the upper part of the lagoon which includes a portion of the river area where large reed beds exist.

The purpose of the count was to determine present numbers for comparison with future counts and so discover what the effect of future land development and recreational disturbance will be on the waterfowl habits. Unfortunately I no longer have the use of a canoe, which is essential, and had to discontinue the study. I hope that this article will encourage other members to continue.

Here follows a six months tabulation of my counts

	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Red-knobbed Coot	2000+	2000+	215	950	263	400+
Red-eyed Pochard	250	483	263	425	740	1300+
Yellow-bill Duck	50	99	150	200	631	395
African Shelduck	-	-	-	-	9	1000+

Only four species of waterfowl occurred in large numbers in 1973. It would appear that Coots tend to winter in large numbers on the lagoon and decrease once the weather warms. The reverse seems to be the case for the other species.

Concerning the habitat preferences, the Yellow-bill Duck are the more secretive, hiding in the tall and dense reed. African Shelduck were generally widely dispersed on open water, except when they congregated on exposed shorelines in large groups, together with Egyptian Geese from which they are not easily distinguished. The Coot and Pochard seem to share the same habitat. They do so by congregating in large groups in areas where the water is never more than 2-3 metres deep, containing heavy growth of a Potamogeton type water grass. These two birds so intermingle that to the unwary observer they may all appear to be Coots. However on approaching them by boat, the Pochard readily lift off the water vertically, displaying their conspicuous white wingbar, whilst the Coot will run on the water and take to flight horizontally. Two observers are necessary to make a simultaneous count.

In smaller numbers the foll. waterfowl may also be found on the lagoon: Maccoa Duck, Red-bill Teal, Spurwig Geese, Cape Shovellers, Dabchick and Great Crested Grebes.

Should there be energetic members willing to continue the counts, I can be contacted by phone (433638) almost any evening.

HARTLAUB'S GULLS NESTING ON ROOF

Members may have read the report in the Argus, 4May, 1974, that these gulls have nested on the roof of the City Hospital, Green Point. In 1939 gulls nested on roofs in Dover, England. A full report of this rare event by Drs. Broekhuysen/Elliott will appear in Bokmakierie.

A HEARTY WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

who joined in June.

Dr. F.J. Wannenburg,	Mr. C. Wiese,	Mrs. M.J. Wren-Sargente
Miss. Caro Basson,	Mr. D.A. Hicks,	Miss. C.H. Reitz,
Mev. Ora E. Besseling,	Mr. G.G.H. Jeffreys,	Mrs. D.C. Steele,
Miss. S.M. Bryce,	Mr. W.D. Marsh,	Mrs. N.R. Tindale,
Miss. Rheina Epstein,	Mrs. B.V. Mitchley,	Mr. J.E. Triegaardt,
Mrs. B.E. Field,	Mrs. Joan Platzky,	Mrs. M.M. Vermeulen,