

CAPE BIRD CLUB — KAAPSE VOELWAARNEMERSKLUB
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NEWSLETTER

NUUSBRIEF

NO 116 NR

MAY 1975 MEI

JOINT EDITORS: R.K. SCHEMIDT & PHILIP TONGUE

ALL COMMUNICATIONS PLEASE TO THE CLUB'S P.O. BOX

GERRY BROEKHUYSEN

It was with extreme shock that we received the sad news of Gerry's unexpected death in Athens on Wednesday 16th April, 1975, which was the day of Gerry and Mariette's 39th wedding anniversary and 3 days before his 67th birthday. A little more than a week before the couple had left with high expectations on the first leg of a well-earned European holiday tour - which was cut short in such a disastrous manner by his rapidly fatal illness.

Gerry had many facets to his make-up which one could extol. He was an ornithologist of international repute, an academician, broadcaster, photographer of considerable ability and devoted husband and family man. However, it is in the context of his association with the Cape Bird Club and the South African Ornithological Society that we knew him best and he made his maximal impact on us. There probably has been no other person who for so long has identified himself so completely with these two bodies as Gerry Broekhuysen, and few have surpassed or equalled the contributions he made in this sphere. In all these activities he was constantly supported and assisted by his wife Mariette.

In the early days after the war he, with a small body of other enthusiasts, was responsible for the founding of the Cape Bird Club as a branch of the South African Ornithological Society. From this time onwards up to the time of his death he played an extremely active roll in all ornithological activities. He figured prominently in the administration of the Committee of the Cape Bird Club, the Council and its many committees of the S.A.O.S. and the Council of the Wild Life Protection Society of South Africa. Indeed, he was Chairman of the Cape Bird Club for a period of 30 years and more recently had been nominated as President of the Club. The extent of this honour which was bestowed on him and the esteem with which he was held by this body can be gauged by the fact that this office had not been filled since the death of Dr. L. Gill in 1956. Apart from serving on the Council of the S.A.O.S. for a great many years he was also its Chairman on occasions and more recently was President of the Society for a period of 5 years. At the same time in his professional capacity as an ornithologist he has contributed numerous scientific and popular papers on various aspects of ornithology to local and international journals and was the recipient of the Gill Memorial Medal.

Significant as these contributions are, we the rank and file of the Cape Bird Club, will remember him most for the completely selfless manner in which he devoted so much of his time to enable others to enjoy their bird watching. He was always to the forefront at the meetings and outings and no matter how mundane or elementary the information, it was passed on to those present with enthusiasm and in the same meticulous manner as when he lectured students. His approach has nationwide introduced innumerable people to the delightful recreational pastime of bird-study; in others it has stimulated them to take up ornithology as a career.

Gerry is going to be sorely missed and those that remain have a great responsibility to him and others who also are no longer with us, to maintain and promote the welfare of this Club and Society, which they so dearly cherished. Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to Mariette and to Jim and Paul and their families in their bereavement. We greatly admire the fortitude they have shown under the extreme circumstances of his death.

DIRK UYS
JOHN MARTIN.

NOTES AND COMMENTSTHE RONDEVLEI EXHIBITION

All who visited the exhibition at Rondevlei will have been very much impressed by its quality. The simple message was that our birds are precious and that they need protection. This was coupled with a display of the work done, (by the sanctuary) since it was created in 1952. It is a pity that the requirements of the Leonard Gill Museum do not permit of that part being a permanent exhibit, for there must be very many folk who haven't the slightest idea of what goes on behind the scenes.

We congratulate Ernest Middlemiss on yet another of his most vivid and interesting exhibitions.

THE A.G.M.

An Agenda for the Club's Annual General Meeting will be found on the back page of this NEWSLETTER. It takes place in the Zoology Theatre at the University of Cape Town, at 8.15 p.m. on Friday May 23, and it would be nice if more members turned up for it than they usually do. AGM's are not the most attractive of occasions, yet they form part of the democratic scheme of things, and provide, not only an opportunity of changing the management, but of criticising and praising what the management has done. This year's meeting is to have something quite out of the ordinary to wind it up, in the way of one of the films made in Britain by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds; BIRDS OF THE GREY WIND. Now for those who have not heard about this branch of the RSPB's activities, it might be mentioned that its films often carry off awards for documentaries; that they are shown all over Britain as part of the Society's membership drives, and that they are so popular, that some showings, such as those at the Royal Festival Hall, are so heavily overbooked that only a handful of those wishing to see them are able to do so. The CBC is extremely fortunate in being able to have this outstanding film and we do urge members to endure the business part of May 23rd for the sake of the sugared pill that winds up the evening.

THE SAOS AGM

This has been planned to take place on Saturday June 7 and the agenda will already be in the hands of CBC members. On that evening the Gill Memorial Lecture will be given by Dr. A.G. MacLean, to whom the Gill Medal was awarded this year. This is another occasion which members are urged to attend. In recent years Gill Memorial Lectures have been given in Cape Town by Dr. Clancy, and by Mrs. Hall (who came specially to Cape Town from London to receive the award) and can be regarded as one of the more important events in South African ornithology. Saturday evening June 7, venue still to be decided.

ANNUAL DINNER

Since the SAOS's AGM is in Cape Town this year, the CBC, as usual at such times, will be host to members coming from other places, and will entertain them, as well as its own members, to dinner on June 6th. This will again be at the St. James's Hotel and will cost R 3.50.....! An application form will be sent to members later, but, since these affairs are always pleasant and enjoyable, make a note in your diary now!

CAPE POINT RESTAURANT

The wall chart for display in the Cape Point Restaurant is ready, and may be in position by the time this NEWSLETTER is in members' hands. It shows 15 of the commoner birds taken from the booklet SOME PROTECTED BIRDS OF THE CAPE PROVINCE kindly presented to the Club by the Nature Conservation Department of the Provincial Administration, together with the accompanying descriptive matter, and headed (or rather footed) by a suggestion that those interested might like to join the CBC. We should like to thank the Department of Nature Conservation for its willing help, and the proprietors of the restaurant for their co-operation.

A CBC LEAFLET

A leaflet has also been prepared setting out the aims and objects of the club, and designed to stimulate interest and to recruit members. Copies will be available, it is hoped, about the time of the next NEWSLETTER, when any member may have some.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY needs someone to act as its Hon. Treasurer. Is there any retired accountant, book-keeper or perhaps even Bank3/

Manager who would like to tackle this work? One of this NEWSLETTER's Joint Editors held this post for about 18 months before he left South Africa for a spell, and found it extremely interesting. It also admits its holder to meetings of the SAOS Council, quite a privilege and an additional interest to the job.

Please contact Dr. M.A. Connor, Secretary SAOS, P.O. Box 3371, CAPE TOWN. 8000.

THIS NEWSLETTER is smaller than some have been, and the reason is that if we incorporate in it the Agenda for the Annual General Meeting it would save postage of that document. But the Agenda must be posted at least 21 days before the meeting, and this has made it necessary to hurry up the preparation of the remainder of the circular. Quite a lot of interesting material has had to be omitted, though it is hoped to get most of it into the July issue. Contributors may like to know that the deadline for anything is about July 10.

Mrs. Broekhuysen has informed the Secretary that whilst it was not the wish of herself and her family that flowers should be sent for Dr. Broekhuysen's funeral, it would be pleasing if those who would like to pay tribute to him, should send an equivalent donation to the Cape Bird Club.

This would indeed be most welcome and the Committee is very appreciative of this generous request. It is beyond doubt that the Club will wish to remember its much-loved Chairman in some permanent form.

This will be discussed by the incoming Committee. We hope to have more news in the next NEWSLETTER.

MEMBERS' REPORTS

SIGHTINGS

HAMMERKOP (72) Two seen flying over Bergvliet Farm 7 April. JOHN HARVEY.

And one at the Rondevlei Corner of Zeekoe Vlei, 13 April by P. Tongue. Both these sightings are interesting because there seems to be a reduction of these birds in the Peninsula in recent years.

A most interesting letter has been received from Mr. E.L. ROBERTS, a new member resident at Sandbay, Hermanus. Because of the importance of some of his information, it is felt that we should mention that Mr. Roberts has had over 50 years' experience of serious birdwatching, has been employed as a professional ornithologist for 17 years by the British Government, and is well-known to the Rarities Committee of the B.O.U. His letter has been divided into two sections, part reprinted below: the remainder under "Behaviour etc."

- AFRICAN GOSHAWK (160) 1 Male Afdaks River mouth 24 March 1974
- GREY PHALAROPE (271) 1 Afdaks River mouth 24 March 1974
- KNOT (254) 1 Langebaan Lagoon 12 April 1974
- YELLOW WAGTAIL (689) 1 Hermanus Lagoon 21 April 1974
- BLACKSMITH PLOVER (245) Pair with nest containing clutch of six eggs, Milnerton 22 September 1974. Roberts records only one previous clutch of this size.
- GLOSSY IBIS (83) 2 Milnerton 21 September 1974
- HADEDA (84) 1 at dam in Little Karoo (Brand River area) 16 October 1974. Roberts records this species only as far south as George.

WILSON'S PHALAROPE PHALAROPUS TRICOLOR 1 Afdaks River mouth 27 October 1974. Apparently a new species for Southern Africa. This bird was watched at close quarters for the better part of two hours. It displayed typical phalarope characteristics, e.g. was extremely confiding and approachable, swam occasionally though most time was spent wading in the shallows (Wilson's differs from the other two phalarope species in this respect) perfect views were obtained of the birds lobed toes when it scratched its head. The legs were dark slate and the longish, very thin bill was a noticeable feature. In flight the bird showed a white rump and dark wings with no discernable wing-bar. This species is a vagrant to Britain and Northern Europe from the U.S.A. There is some evidence that migratory American species, when "displaced" to Europe continue migration between north and south which could account for this species occurring in Africa.

FISH EAGLE (149) Pair breeding (1 well-grown eaglet in nest) on ledge on a sheer rock face on mountainside, elevation c.500 feet, in Southern Cape coastal area, 17 November 1974. According to the literature this situation for the eyrie is extremely unusual if not unique. The nest site is invariably described as being in a tree.

BLACK-BELLIED GLOSSY STARLING

(740) 1 roosting in reedbed Onrust River mouth 5 February 1975, in company with large numbers of European and Pied Starlings, European Swallows, Cape Weavers, etc. Completely black but with a slight greenish sheen on back. Another or (probably) the same bird appeared at a bird bath in my garden at Sandbay on 18 February when it was well studied from a window at close range. The black, typically starling-type bill, black legs and pale yellow eye were well seen. Again, the all-black plumage showed a slight greenish iridescence. Recorded by Roberts as occurring only as far south as Knysna.

MEMBERS' REPORTS: BEHAVIOUR ETC.

MARSH SANDPIPER (262)

I would suggest that the wetting of the bill by Marsh Sandpipers while preening noted by the same observer, is in no way unusual. Though I am as yet not very familiar with this species, having only fairly recently emigrated here from Britain, where it is rare, I have over very many years observed the habit of bill-dipping while preening in a number of wader species in Britain, and Europe including European Snipe, Curlew, Whimbrel, Black-tailed Godwits, Redshanks, Spotted Redshank, Greenshank, Dunlin and Ruff. I have always regarded this as a very common facet of wader behaviour.

HARTLAUB'S GULL (289)

Referring to Mr. E.T. Holder's observation on the "Paddling" action by Hartlaub's Gulls, this is a common habit of Black-headed Gulls LARUS RIDIBUNDUS in Britain and Europe.

E.H. ROBERTS. SANDBAY

WHITE STORK (80)

For the last few years White Storks, which originally were taken as young from nests in the Bredasdorp District, have been kept in an enclosed camp at the Tygerberg Zoo. They have been kept there to enable me to study and observe their behaviour and it is also hoped that when they have become adult (this is in Europe after four to five years) some of them would perhaps start to breed.

Great was our excitement when at the end of last year some wild storks started to spend time in the zoo and eventually joined the captive ones at times. Two of these eventually took food at feeding times in the afternoon. Then in January two wild storks started to build a nest on top of one of the bird cages only a short distance from the stork enclosure. Before the nest was completed, however, it was blown off by a gale force wind. In the beginning of February the two birds started to build a new nest, this time in the corner and on top of the wire fence of the lion cage. Both birds built and eventually it was a great bulky structure.

Who would have thought that this would happen?

The birds are not timid at all and remain on the nest while visitors look at the lions.

The big question mark was, what would happen in March when these storks show a strong migratory restlessness and should embark on their long voyage to the breeding quarters in Europe. Would they stay behind? Would they lay eggs? Or would they abandon the newly built nest and join the others moving north? Well it is now the last half of March and they are still here. Twice they have been seen together with a flock high up in the air and coming down to the nest, while others went on. Most of the time the nest is unoccupied and no eggs have been laid, but one or both birds frequently stay on the nest during the night, arriving in the evening and leaving early in the morning.

It certainly looks as if these two will stay and not emigrate north. It also looks as if they at least for some time will not lay eggs. Are they going to breed in our spring as the birds in Bredasdorp do? The birds which are now on their way north will breed in April, May and June.5/

Time will tell what will happen, but the fact that these built a nest is already most interesting.

G.J. BROEKHUYSEN

CLUB ACTIVITIES

Since the last NEWSLETTER we have had two evening meetings; at the first of these (on March 14) Beaumont Rowlands spoke of his visit to Gough Island (where he was unable to land) and Tristan da Cunha, where, with the greatest good fortune, he was. This made his visit all the more memorable, because the rule there is that no one may go ashore. Mr. Rowlands is quite obviously quite barmy about sea birds, and brings enormous enthusiasm, and a growing expertise to his talks this being the second he has so far given us. What I particularly liked was his detailed camera exploration of the little township which left in my mind almost vivid a picture of life there, as though I had been ashore myself. More please The second talk, on April 18 was about something quite different, the birds of Alexandra Forest, by Dr. John Marcus, who has been working on aspects of bird song there for the past two years. The difference between the two talks was that whilst I felt I had visited Tristan, Dr. Marcus left me with a strong desire to visit his forest.

The only excursion was the camping weekend at Bottelary, on the shore of Langebaan Lagoon. About fifteen cars arrived, and, whilst there was a little rain, the weather was kind enough. About 50 species were seen, and among those not frequently recorded by members was the Knot (254), Great Sandplover (239), and Terek Sandpiper (257). There was also one Curlew (267), a bird but rarely sighted here on the west coast, where, if one may put it in this way, most of the Curlews are Whimbrel.

P. TONGUE

THE MARINA DA GAMA COUNTS

These Sundays forays at Sand Vlei have now settled down into a routine, and most of us who turn up regularly now know what to expect and, perhaps what is more to the point WHERE to expect what. So the March and April counts both showed totals of about 4300 individuals (March 4367, April 4290) and both months a total of about 70 species. Whereas in the earlier counts the major species was Hartlaub's Gull (289), the emphasis has now shifted to the Coot (212) and, if the counts were reasonably accurate, the difference between March and April was 11 birds! April was the first time Pelicans (42) were recorded in any number, 34 being seen flying overhead. Among the less frequently recorded birds in the Peninsula, the Pied Barbet (432) was seen 1 individual on each occasion and a Giant Kingfisher (395) in April. Another April rarity, identified rather on the grounds of "what else could it be?" supported by Dr. Winterbottom, and listed with a following "?" was the Bar-Tailed Godwit (266) And surprisingly, the familiar Chat (570) which I think made its first appearance on the April list.

Again it must be noted how much we all enjoy these Sundays. As a happy "get-together" nothing, so far, has been so successful.

ORNITHOLOGY

It is often that one is asked "what book would you recommend which will give me good general information about birds?"

Obviously in a case like this a book is wanted which is easy to read and still will be detailed enough to provide good knowledge of the many facets of birds and the way they live.

It is also important that the book is relatively cheap to buy.

Such a book, I think, is now available. It is ORNITHOLOGY : AN INTRODUCTION by Austin L. Rand which has just come out in a paper back edition as one of the Penguin Book series and only costing R 1.80.

This book is certainly good value and will answer many of the questions which people interested in birds ask.

G.J. BROEKHUYSEN

SUBSCRIPTIONS: ABOUT SEVENTY MEMBERS STILL OWE THE HON. TREASURER THEIR SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 1975. THIS INFORMATION IS GIVEN WITHOUT COMMENT;

COMING EVENTS

THIS is the only notification members will receive about the arrangements for the coming three months. Please keep it handy!

THE A.G.M.

Notice is hereby given that the TWENTY-SEVENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Cape Bird Club will take place at the Zoology Lecture Theatre. U.C.T. on Friday, May 23, 1975, at 8.15 p.m.

A G E N D A

1. Apologies
 2. (a) Minutes of the 26th Annual General Meeting.
(b) Matters arising from the Minutes.
 - 3.
 3. REPORTS
 - (a) By the Chairman
 - (b) By the Hon. Treasurer
 - (c) By the Project Organisers.
 4. Election of officers for 1975/76.
 5. Any other business.
-

The formal part of the evening will be followed by a film produced by the Royal Society of Birds. Please make every effort to attend this most important meeting the one where you can vote for the Committee YOU would like.

OTHER EVENTS

Remember Friday 16 May. At the Zoology Lecture Theatre. 8.15 pm.
Prof. C.J. UYS "Days with Birds".

.. SUNDAY MAY 25. Field excursion to Red Hill, Simonstown. Meet just over the cattle grid on the left-hand turn about 1 km beyond the disused café, at 9.30 am. Leader John Harvey.

ANNUAL DINNER St. James's Hotel June 6. (see page 2)

A.G.M. See above.

Sunday June 22. Field excursion to ARIESKRAAL. GRABOUW.
To get to the meeting-place, stop at the Viljoenshoop road, 2.8km beyond first Grabouw-Villiersdorp turn-off. There is a fair amount of parking space on the National Road itself and more parking on the Viljoenshoop road just off the National Road. From here you will be piloted to ARIESKRAAL.
Leader John Martin. 15 minutes allowed for latecomers, but official starting-time is 10.00 am.

THE ROAD FROM THE MEETING PLACE IS VERY TRICKY AND LATECOMERS MAY NOT BE ABLE TO FIND THEIR WAY;
Friday July 22 at the Zoology Theatre. 8.15 pm.

Talk by Dr. P.D. Shaughnessy on BIRDS OF MACQUARIE ISLAND.
Macquarie Islands lies about 55 South of Australia/ New Zealand, and Dr. Shaughnessy was stationed there for two years engaged on research into sea birds and seals.
