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CAPE BIRD CLUB — KAAPSE VOELWAARNEMERSKLUB
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NEWSLETTER

NUUSBRIEF

NO. 119 NR

NOVEMBER 1975 NOVEMBER

Editors: R.K. Schmidt and Phillip Tongue.

The January 1976 Issue will be posted about January 10.
 Last date for communications December 20.
 Please address them to the Club's P.O. Box.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

THE SLIDE SHOW

Everything is now in train for this, the first large-scale fund-raising effort by the Club and a separate sheet enclosed with this issue gives full details.

The same programme is to be shown on both evenings, and the sub-committee responsible has no doubt at all that this will be the best collection of bird photographs ever shown, in Cape Town. Whilst it is intended for the general public, members alone could fill the BP Cinema for both evenings, and so long as it is filled everyone will be pleased, and the Conservation fund will be augmented by a useful sum.

The slides will be introduced by Rudolph Schmidt, who will give a brief commentary on each bird. The first part will be devoted to our own Western Cape birds, the second to those less familiar ones, occurring in the remainder of Southern Africa.

The photographers taking part are Dr. Guy Currie, John Harvey, Howard Langley, Derek Longrigg, Nico Myburgh, Stuart Pringle, Dr. Bambine Rauch, David Steele, and Dr. Viljoen.

WE WANT TO SEE FULL HOUSES for this, our first public fund-raising show. If it is successful other public shows (for which the Committee is already planning) will follow. So please buy tickets, and sell them to your friends..... and start to-day.

SLIDE LIBRARY

On the topic of slides we might remind members that the Club has a collection of slides which they may borrow on application to Len Hicks at 6-3470, and, for those who have no projector we have that too. A small charge is made for this.

The Keeper of the Slide Library (!) is always happy to receive donations of slides. Telephone and ask him which species he wants.

LAMBERTS BAY

Members will be delighted to learn that the Department of Sea Fisheries has met half the cost of the notice board, erected by the Club at Lamberts Bay. What is especially pleasing is the recognition in official quarters of its educational value, and of the contribution towards preservation and protection of the gannet colony it will make. The best thanks of all members goes to the Department for its enlightened action.

GOOD NEWS FROM THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE NATURE RESERVE

It is also good news that the Club's Secretary has received a letter from the Divisional Council of the Cape, informing him that the shore between Olifantsbosch and Scarborough, has been declared a protected area during the breeding season. This will go a long way towards the preservation of the Black Oystercatchers (231) as a breeding species in the Cape Peninsula.

We are grateful to the Divisional Council for their active response to the plea made by the Club that this should be done, and, still more, for the evidence that is accumulating, of the Sympathetic attitude, not only of this body, but of other official bodies, to the urgent need to save some of the beautiful land in their charge, from unrestricted exploitation. They will find a wholehearted, if at times critical, ally, in the Cape Bird Club.

As a footnote to this, I (Philip Tongue) went to the Cape Point Reserve on November 1st. I was delighted to find the rangers hard at work watching the crawfish catchers and checking that they were not exceeding the permitted total. (Of course some were, and seemed to be destined for the Magistrate's Court). I was informed that notice boards indicating the protection of the Olifantsbosch-Scarborough coast were in preparation and would soon be erected. This is indeed great news, because I, personally, have been extremely worried about Cape Point, and this new attitude is more than welcome... as it will be to all interested in our avifauna. Motor vehicles driving off the permitted roads were also being checked; and this is another violation of the regulations that has been winked at for too long. I went on to the restaurant, and members will be pleased to hear that the "picture" of a dozen or so of the Cape Point birds that the Club prepared, is well displayed there. The promised field Museum is still not opened, but a peep through the windows shows a display in the course of preparation, this is going to be an important educational asset to the reserve.

The two things that I didn't like are, first the widening of the road to Cape Point, which is not necessary in a nature reserve, as it can only encourage fast driving, and the rapidly deteriorating State of the world-famous Cape of Good Hope itself, which, since the making of that deplorable road to its foot, is being daily eroded by the visitors who clamber up its sandy sides. It is surprising that so well-known a promontory has not been proclaimed an Historical Monument.

BEGINNERS' OUTINGS

It cannot be said that the walks along the Pipe Track on Saturday mornings, announced in NEWSLETTER no. 118 aroused our members to any noticeable enthusiasm! After a turnout of three on the first, there was no subsequent attendance, and the organiser, Mr. Schmidt has reluctantly come to the conclusion that although such outings have often been asked for, those who wanted them, could not get to Kloof Nek. Although he often visits the Pipe Track, his presence there can no longer be counted on, on Saturday mornings, and whilst anyone joining him will welcome, officially these trips are "off".

FUNDS AVAILABLE

May we remind members that the SAOS has funds available for any research projects officially approved. The Secretary of the Society will provide information about how to apply.

CLIVE ELLIOTT

Those who were associated with Clive during his stay in Cape Town will be happy to learn that he is now working for the FAO Quelea investigation in Tchad and that on the 26th of September he married. The advance notice for the wedding had a footnote "coups d'état permitting" and a subsequent letter informed me that it was a narrow miss, but, despite political unrest the marriage did take place. This extract from the letter will, I am sure be of interest to members.

"The quelea itself is proving a most impressive bird. Not only is the male of the species attractive to look at, but its highly developed sociality3

is always an ornithological treat to watch. My task is to do a study of the migrations of the species within this region, with a view to crop protection. The idea is that if the migrations can be shown to follow a certain time schedule it should be possible to avert damage to harvesting before the birds arrive or by having non-preferred grains growing while they are around.

Readers might like to have a further quote, this time from Mackworth+Praed & Grant (Birds of Western & Central Africa 1973). "The Red-billed Quelea (805) in one or other of its racial forms has become one of the major agricultural problems of Africa, and is the only bird known to us which has necessitated the calling of an International Conference.

P.T.

CHRISTMAS CARDS

There will be no new Christmas Cards from the SAOS this year, but there are still some of those printed last year, and these will be on sale at the next (and last) meeting on Friday 21st November. Every one you buy helps the Society.

AND 1976

There being no programme to announce, the back page is devoted to the SLIDE SHOW.

The DATES of next years meetings will be announced in the January NEWSLETTER together with details of the first meetings and excursions. The system adopted for the first time this year, of only giving details of the next two month's events seems to have met with approval from members, it has certainly enabled the Committee to cope with unforeseen events involving changes of plan, with a minimum of complications.

So, after what we trust will be a great get-together at the BP Cinema on December 11 and 12, we shall have Christmas to enjoy or endure (according to temperament and experience) and, for this, your Committee wish you all a very happy one.

And, since they say that Christmas has become a commercial festival, may I remind you that subscriptions become payable on January 1st Ordinary Members R 6.50, Family, 50 cents per additional member, and Junior R 2.50. So far unaffected by inflation.

An Appeal

HAS ANYBODY an old hide with a dismantable aluminium frame, or even just the frame, for sale? Please telephone David Steele at 58-1757 if they have.

CLUB ACTIVITIES

The two excursions held since the last NEWSLETTER attracted a good number of members, especially the one to the Cape Coloured Corps Training centre, on Sunday October 5th the editor having botched up the directions for getting there, there were, not surprisingly, some latecomers. On the whole though it was something of a disappointing excursion, chiefly because the water level was too high to allow of a circuit of the vleis to be taken, although the organisers had expected that it would be possible. But then, this year's rains have been later than usual. There were the expected water birds, though not as many as was hoped, their reduced numbers were more than compensated for by the abundant horseflies. In the circumstances it was not unexpected that most people left early. It is a pity that we had such poor luck, because it is certainly a promising place.

That to the Marina da Gama on September 20 produced many interest sightings, though a very chilly wind must have kept both birds and members in more sheltered spots. Among the birds seen were three Spoonbills (85) Cape Dikkop (275), Purple Gallinule (208), Night Heron (69), Great Crested Grebe (4), Pied Kingfisher (394), a Yellow-billed egret (60) plus a good assortment of other water and bush birds.

.....4/

That there is a wealth of bird life in this place is by now well-known

That there is a wealth of bird life in this place is by now a well-known to those who so faithfully turn up at the monthly counts. It is also a good place to learn some of the less usually seen Cape Birds, and what is more nicely accessible. Its principal adverse characteristic is the cold False Bay wind.

EVENING MEETINGS

On September 19 Dr. Bambine Rauch took us to the Okovango & Chobe. This is more or less exactly what she did, reminding us not only of the excitements but the longueurs+ One of the best bird photographers in the Western Cape, she interspersed the account of the journey, with the sort of bird portraits that make some of us wonder whyever WE trouble to try (not that it stops is trying), and enlivened the pictures with the characteristic Bambine racy commentary. More please.....

The October meeting was devoted to an account of the activities of one of the Club's more important projects, the work of the Wader Group. Perhaps because the title did not promise slides it attracted one of the smaller audiences, which is a pity, because the Wader Group is doing a job of top-importance. Instead of commenting on the talk, we have included an account of just what this group is doing. The appeal for assistance during the coming holidays is meant for YOU who are reading the NEWSLETTER.

THE MARINA DA GAMA COUNTS

The last two counts, made on September 14 and October 12 showed that the decline in numbers, from a peak of 4,367 in March continues, a total of 1,312 being counted in September and 1,364 in October. Whether September was the bottom of the decline ought to show at the November count, because Waders and terns are now arriving, and numbers ought to build up again. However, since March the Eastern side of the vlei has been totally wrecked as a habitat for anything other than Homo sapiens, and from now onwards information about the effect of the development will begin to be of greater interest. Those members who have attended counts so regularly may, I think, congratulate themselves on making a real contribution to our knowledge.

With the November count we shall have completed a full year, and it is hoped that the next (January) NEWSLETTER may contain a report from the ecologist at Marina da Gama, George Begg.

R E P O R T S & O B S E R V A T I O N S

(A) SIGHTINGS

SACRED IBIS (81)

Between 20 September and 3 October 1975, a small flock of these birds were observed on five occasions near a "Rietvlei" about one mile south of the Sports Ground and Caravan Park in Clanwilliam. The maximum number seen on any occasion was nine.

PAUL KIHN CLANWILLIAM

Surprisingly there is no record for this district in the CBC Check List (1963)

BLACK EAGLE (133)

On Monday 15 September I was at the Karoo Gardens, Worcester,, and at noon, I saw a Black Eagle diving for Dassies on the koppie directly behind the gardens. It was a cold day, with a strong N W wind and very little sun.

The orator, Mr. B. Bayer, tells me that this species is only seen there about once in every three months. Perhaps anyone visiting the Karoo Gardens might like to look out for it.

ELIZABETH COWARD WYNBERG. Sept. 18.

EUROPEAN MALLARD

During the afternoon of 25/7/75 whilst counting Yellow-billed duck on the banks of the Bot River I found to my surprise what could be described as a "Foreign" duck in that it was not a normal South African inhabitant I immediately wrote down a detailed description. Later I consulted Mr. Langley Roberts, who with his experience of northern hemisphere waterfowl, immediately identified the "foreigner" as being the mallard. This specimen was a male and could therefore be identified easily and without confusion, say with European Shoveller. Dr. David Whitelaw on commenting on the above5/

sighting, says that the Mallard often associates with Yellow-bill Cuck and there is evidence which suggests that they sometimes cross-breed, although the offspring appear to be infertile.

ARTHUR GREGORY

BLACK-NECKED GREBE (5)

On a dull grey rainy morning of 31/8/75 in the company of Langley and Madeline Roberts we saw what we took to be a young Great-crested Grebes on the waters of the lagoon. What was unusual about them was that they appeared to be in a "nursery" group. They were feeding very actively and quite a distance away. In size they were smaller than the Dabchicks. Later however, they came in very close to our position and to our delight we realized our error, and from the dazzling whiteness of their plumage, were able to identify them as Black-necked Grebes in winter plumage. We counted 48 altogether. They were delightful to watch especially as they can almost turn themselves completely over whilst on the water, to preen their belly feathers, which had a remarkable whiteness.

ARTHUR GREGORY

BLACK HARRIER (169)

En route to Clanwilliam On October 3, 1975, a Black Harrier was seen crossing the National Road a few kms. north of Piketberg, and 35 kms. from Citrusdale, carrying small rodents in its talons, and showing the heavily-barred black and white tail to great advantage. The bird landed on short pastureland by the roadside, very near to a Black Stork (79), which was dozing in the sun. Neither bird took slightest notice of the other and we watched the Harrier for fifteen minutes proceeding to devour rodent by tearing off strips of flesh. After the meal it showed no inclination to fly off. This is in the same area where P.T. reported his sighting in August.

PAT LOCKHART SOMERSET WEST.

Prof. Roy Siegfried reported to P.T. on October 17 that one had been found with a nest with chicks in the Langebaan area.

AFRICAN GOSHAWK (160)

Does the African Goshawk occur in the Cape Peninsula?
For the past 5 - 8 years I have regularly been aware of a typically short-winged hawk soaring in the early mornings above my house, which is off Boshof Avenue in Newlands, on clear days, just before or after sunrise, for about half an hour or so. This behaviour is most obvious from September to November. The bird soars slowly about 100 ft. up in wide circles alternately flapping and gliding while it utters a "kwit, kwit" call at intervals. While not loud the "kwit, kwit" call is penetrating and will often attract my attention while inside the house. In response to this I usually go outside where I have no difficulty in picking up the bird. Occasionally, but less frequently, this behaviour is noticed in the evenings as well.

Because of its short-winged silhouette and knowing that the Red-breasted Sparrow Hawk (*Accipiter rufiventris*) occurs here I have just assumed the bird to be a Sparrow Hawk and that this was part of its early morning display. However, I have witnessed the same display in the Eastern Province, Natal and elsewhere, and when mentioning this to friends there they have invariably expressed surprise at this being a Sparrow Hawk as the African Goshawk (*accipiter tachiro*) is well known to behave in this manner. Since, I have consulted Roberts (McLachlan & Liversidge 1970), Brown & Amadon 1968, & Brown 1970, and in every instance the above description is regarded as typical for early morning display of the African Goshawk. None of these authorities mentions the Red-breasted Sparrow Hawk behaving in this way.

It would thus appear that for all these years I have unwittingly been observing the African Goshawk. If this is so this would not only constitute a new record for the Peninsula but also one of some duration. This is all the more surprising when one considers the number of local knowledgeable ornithologists who have either not observed this rather common event or also have been unaware of its significance. The sight identification of this bird requires verification which should not be too difficult for sharp-sighted and early-rising bird watchers living near Newlands Forest.

PROF. C.J. UYS

BLACK HARRIER (169)

Additions to 1975 sightings already notified:

1 near Stanford, 18.9.75

1 near Napier, 10.10.75

Pair near Bot River, 11.10.75 (see also breeding records below)

1 near Albertyn, 19.10.75.

GABAR GOSHAWK (162)

1 at Sandbay, Hermanus, 26.9.75. Stated in Roberts not to occur south-west of the line Springbok-Oudtshoorn.

E.L. ROBERTS HERMANUS

This is a very interesting record. The CBC Check List (1963) states, in its appendix of doubtful etc. species "There is an old specimen from the Cape Division in the South African Museum, and Andrew Smith records it from the Olifants River, December, 1828. Recent sight records from Somerset West". In 1960 the Club adopted the rule that records of species new to the area would only be accepted if there was either a specimen (which heaven forbid!) or a recognisable photograph, or if the bird had been identified by at least two members of its Record Committee. Has any other member seen this bird?

EUROPEAN BEE-EATER (404)

On 29 September, very close to Redlinghuys, on the road that runs along the river to Verlorenvlei and on to Elands Baai, we were able to see a colony of European Bee-eaters, not just one or two, but several groups of half a dozen, which settled on the fences on each side of the road, and on the telephone wires. Our presence did not disturb them at all, and later, we found that they were nesting in a small cutting, or donga next to the road.

H.A. NOBLE LLANDUDNO 1/10/75

VERLORENVLEI

That the Verloren Vlei area is one of the best birding areas within a reasonable distance of Cape Town is borne out by the following note from Pat Lockhart. There are Caravan Parks at Lambert's Bay & Clanwilliam, and hotels in both these places. Other hotels certainly do exist in the area too. (e.g. a one star at Elands Bay) and two of the same grading at Piketberg) so that a weekend is quite possible without the need to get back the same day.

A TRIP TO VERLOREN VLEI VIA REDLINGHUYS, and including ELANDS BAY, with another CBC member, Ron Mew on 20 September 1975, proved highly successful. In perfect weather, a warm spring day showed the vlei at its best and still unspoilt. A total of 93 species was recorded. Some of the highlights were a colony of breeding European Bee-eaters (404) near Redlinghuys, flocks of Wattle Starlings (735), Grey Heron (54) breeding and Purple Herons (57) White Pelicans (43) Spoonbills (85). A Sacred Ibis (81), one Yellow-billed Kite (129) one Cape Sea Eagle (149) a pair of Marsh Harriers (163), Black Crake (203) a flock of 12 Black Oystercatchers (231) near the sea entrance to the vlei, Grey-backed Finch-larks (485) Chat Flycatcher (663) and the Ant-eating Chat (575).

ARCTIC SKUA

Watching Seabirds from Green Point on 12 October we observed a passage of Arctic Skuas. In one hour 21 skuas were seen. One bird was feeding at the sewage outfall, the rest were all eating their way westward about 50-100 metres offshore. A pale phase bird was the only definite adult seen. The other skuas were all very dark birds lacking any sign of elongated tail feathers and were probably juveniles.

It would be interesting to know if this kind of passage is a regular feature in the Cape during October. We are also curious about their destination. Were they heading for the Antarctic, or the Indian Ocean, or would they remain off the coasts of southern Africa? Perhaps if anyone sees skuas this summer will they let us know?

B. BEHAVIOUR ETC.

BLACK HARRIER (169)

Male seen carrying prey near Bot River on 11.10.75 was traced to a rather remote rough scrubby hillside close to a large dam, where the female was seen to leave the ground and take the food from her mate, thence returning7/

to the spot from which she had risen. Nest of 3 eggs found at this precise spot, which was on the ground among proteas in an unusually dry situation for this species. The nest was entirely made of dry grasses and not lined "with wool and hair" as stated by Roberts. Two of the young had just hatched on 19.10.75 and the remaining egg was well chipped and would doubtless be hatched by 20th. This, according to data available, gives a laying date about 14.9. The size and condition of the two hatched young suggests that incubation began with the second egg and that the third egg was laid not more than two days after the second. On this occasion (19.10) food was accepted in a "pass" from the male, but was twice rejected. Later the male made several flights low over the nest carrying the food, but after the second rejection by the female, she made no further attempt to take it. It was noted that the male had about three "favorite" perches, or plucking posts, all about 25 metres from the nest. Other points were that she sat very closely on the two occasions when I approached the nest (once on eggs, once with newly hatched young) and made straight away with no attempt to attack, as the hen-harrier (with which I am very familiar) almost invariably does when disturbed from young, especially small ones. As the hatching date has been accurately ascertained, it should now be possible to compute the fledgling period exactly by observing the nest in its later stages of development. It is hoped also to be able to definitely identify some of the prey brought in.

E.L. ROBERTS HERMANUS

AN ALBINO HOOPOE (418)

This evening I saw a most interesting bird in my garden. I noticed a black and white bird working its way along the edge of the lawn, and as I could not be sure what it was, fetched my binoculars I was able to observe it for some time and there is no doubt in my mind that it was an albino Hoopoe. It was behaving in typical Hoopoe manner, digging its bill in the grass and occasionally raising its crest. It was pure white and there was no chestnut of the bird at all, but black on the wings, back and tail, as normal. There may have been black on the tips of the crest, but against a darkish background did not notice. The time was about 5.30 pm, on 20/10.

Mrs. D.M. MULLINS, CONSTANTIA.

AFRICAN HOOPOE (418)

One of the charms of birds is their absurdity.... what is more delightful, yet more absurd, than the dancing Cranes? On the morning of November 1, I had a close-up of a Hoopoe calling from a branch of an oak tree about 5 metres from my living-room window. The calling procedure, which never varied, consisted of (a) open the bill a little, then close it, (b) place the bill on the chest and half-close eyes (c) hoop hoop. But at times, he could not get out the correctly modulated tone, and these were a number of "hoops" preceded by a squeak. I am sure this note is of no ornithological importance whatever!

PHILIP TONGUE. WYNBERG.

C. NESTS AND EGGS

CAPE DIKKOP (275) Nest of 2 eggs on cleared plot, Sandbay, 13.9.75.

Chicks hatched on 15.9.75.

Nest of 2 eggs on sandhills, Sandbay, 28.9.75.

WHITE FRONTED SANDPLOVER (235) Nest of 2 eggs in rock crevice among seashore rocks, Sandbay, 13.9.75

MALACHITE SUNBIRD (751) Nest of 2 eggs in wattle, Bot River Lagoon 14.9.75.

FISH EAGLE (149) Cliff site of 1974 (in S.W. Cape area) reoccupied! well-grown young (1+) on 17.9.75.

BAR THROATED APALIS (622) Pair feeding 2+ newly-fledged young out of nest on 12.10.75.

ROCKJUMPER (540) Pair with nest of 3 young (Roberts states "clutch is nearly always 2"), near Sir Lowry's Pass, 5.10.75. Young estimated to be about 6-7 days old.

WHITE THROATED SWALLOW (495) Pair with nest of 3 almost fully fledged young in culvert under main road, near Bot River, 19.10.75.

E.L. ROBERTS HERMANUS

CATTLE EGRET (61) In company with Alf Brown at Paarl Sewage Works, at the beginning of October we found a very interesting colony of Cattle Egrets over 100 nests, ranging from 5'8" to 20 feet above the ground. We found between 30 and 40 nests mostly containing 2 or 3 eggs, though a few had 4.8/

Several dead nestlings were lying on the ground in various stages of development. The nests were in acacia trees. Amongst them we found.....

NIGHT HERON (69) about 15 nests, built between 6' and 20' above the ground. We were only able to see into 4 nests, one with one, two with two, and one with three eggs, which were above the same shade as those of the Cattle Egrets but smoother in appearance. There were 2 dead nestlings on the ground.

A pair of Purple Heron were seen, but no nest found.

DR. H. GOTTSCHALK & ALF BROWN. PLUMSTEAD

D. MIGRATION.

MIGRATION DATES

EUROPEAN SWIFT (378) 1 at Sandbay 12.9.75
 EUROPEAN SWALLOW (493) Small numbers, Caledon 16.9.75.
 LITTLE STINT (253) Small numbers near Gansbaai 18.9.75
 GREY PLOVER (241) 2 near Gansbaai 18.9.75.
 WHIMBREL (268) Few near Gansbaai, 18.9.75.
 CURLEW (267) 2 near Gansbaai, 18.9.75.
 TURNSTONE (232) Few near Gansbaai, 18.9.75
 RUFF (256) Few, Onrust, 28.9.75.
 RED-CHESTED CUCKOO (343) 1 Sandbay 30.9.75.
 PARADISE FLYCATCHER (682) 1 Onrust, 4.10.75.
 MARSH SANDPIPER (262) 1 Skipskop, 10.10.75.

E.L. ROBERTS HERMANUS;

WESTERN CAPE WADER STUDY GROUP

Those members with good memories may recall reading in Newsletter 102 of the formation of the Western Cape Wader Study Group. The group was formed to co-ordinate the ringing efforts of the small band of local wader enthusiasts, who previously worked as individuals. Since that time the group has doubled in size in spite of the "migration" of two of its founder members. Wader ringing in the Cape is now more efficient as a result of the team effort, and measurements taken from birds in the hand are standardised. Foreign recoveries of our birds have been few up until now, but our highly local retrap rate of 10 - 15% has given us an unparalleled opportunity to study the birds while in their wintering quarters. Our biggest problems in the early days was the ageing of waders (and still is) as well as the correct interpretation of moult patterns. Since 1970, members of the group have ringed about 12,000 Palaearctic waders and we have accumulated a valuable amount of biometric data, mainly on the Curlew Sandpiper, Knot and Sanderling. In 1974 a start was made on the really hard work - analysis of our data. Here we were fortunate in having professional ornithologist (Dr. Clive Elliott) and a statistician (Dr. Less Underhill) in our midst. Our initial analysis was aimed at clarifying several aspects of the migration cycle of the Curlew Sandpiper, for instance the deposition of fat prior to migration, the moult pattern, and the routes it followed by the birds between the Cape and their breeding grounds in Siberia. By combining our data with those gathered by ringers from other parts of Southern Africa, East Africa and England we were able to enlarge the scope of our study to one on a continental basis. Details of about 5,000 Curlew Sandpipers ringed in South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia and Mauritania have now been analysed by computer and the results are at an advanced stage of preparation for publication. Apart from our Curlew Sandpiper work we are participating with members of the British Wader Group in a study of the Knot. With the experience of Palaearctic Waders gained over the years, the Group was recently able to assist in supplying information for the wader section of a new handbook on European birds.

Our activities are not confined to the ringing of waders. For our own interest, and at the recommendation of the Director of the Percy Fitzpatrick Institute, censusing of the Langebaan wader population was undertaken in 1973 and 1974. The value of the counts is that they provide the quantitative population data necessary when making a case for the conservation of the Lagoon. A report giving the results of our Langebaan wader counts will be published in the next issue of the Ostrich. Although the importance of Langebaan is well established, little is known about the number of waders9/

accuring in other parts of the Western Cape. In December and January, when Palaearctic wader movements are minimal, the Wader Group plans to census as many lagoons, estuaries, beaches and rocky shores as possible in the area between Olifants River and Knysna. This project is to be sponsored by the S.A.O.S. Conservation Committee and it will enable ornithologists to form a picture of the total numbers and distribution of waders found along our coastline in summer. From the Conservation viewpoint, it should help us to define the relative importance of different coastal habitats and localities. Additionally, for some wader species such as the Knot we may be able to contribute towards the knowledge of the total world population. This project is a very ambitious undertaking by the Group and although we have already had several offers of help, additional counters from the Bird Club would be very welcome. The holiday season falls into this period and some of you may be visiting areas which we will be unable to cover adequately. Should you be able to help in this respect, please telephone Manfred Waltner 53-2590 or Stephen Pringle 71-4322 and we will provide you with the necessary information and count forms. Counts for any area, whether just around the corner or even outside the Western Cape would be appreciated. Finally we would like to remind members to look out for colour - dyed curlew Sandpipers, Knots and Sanderlings (see Newsletter 118). This programme is being carried out by the Group to learn something of the dispersion of waders from Langebaan.

M. HATTIUS WALTNER
FOR THE W.C.W.S. GROUP.

CONSERVATION - A VOICE FROM THE PAST

Alfred Wallace was one of these great exploring English naturalists whose pioneer work in the last century paved the way for much of the development of the natural sciences. Wallace, whose name is commemorated on the world maps by "Wallace's Line" the approximate boundary between the S E Asian fauna and that of the Australian region It was his researches in the Malay Archipelago in the 1850's that not only led to the establishment of that boundary, but also to an anticipation of Darwin's thoughts that led to the acceptance of evolution and natural selection by all scientists. It is remarkable, and also an indication of Wallace's qualities as a man, that instead of taking a dislike to Darwin for having reached the same conclusions as he, they became close friends, and Wallace encouraged Darwin to publish his "Evolution of Species".

The following extract from his great book "THE MALAY ARCHIPELAGO" shows too, a further anticipation of current problems.

I thought of all the long ages past, during which the successive generations of this little creature had run their courses (The King Bird of Paradise.... *Paradisea regia*) year by year being born, and living, and dying amid these dark and gloomy woods, with no intelligent eye to gaze upon their loveliness; to all appearance such a wanton waste of beauty. Such ideas excite a feeling of melancholy. It seems sad that on the one hand such exquisite creatures should live out their lives and exhibit their charms only in these wild, inhospitable regions, doomed for ages yet to come to hopeless barbarism, while on the other hand, should civilised man ever reach these distant lands, and bring moral, intellectual, and physical light into the recesses of these virgin forests, we may be sure that he will so disturb the nicely balanced relations of organic and inorganic nature as to cause the disappearance, and finally the extinction of these very beings whose wonderful structure and beauty he alone is fitted to appreciate and enjoy.