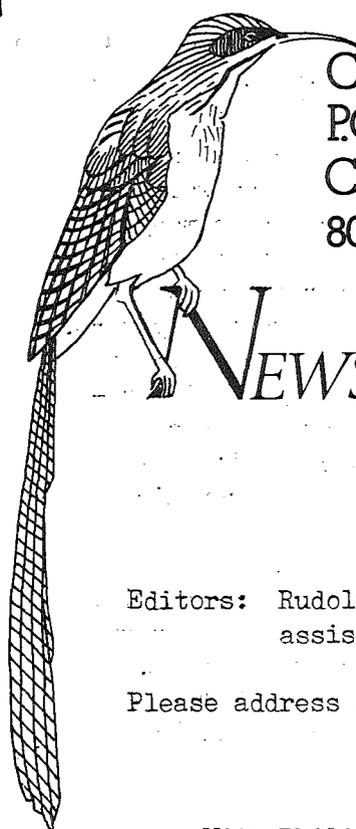


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# NEWSLETTER

# NUUSBRIEF

NO. 122 NR

MAY 1976 MEI

Editors: Rudolf Schmidt and Philip Tongue,  
assisted in this issue by Derek Longrigg and David Steele.

Please address all communications to the Club's P.O. Box

## EDITORIAL

With Philip Tongue overseas, enjoying a well earned holiday, we take this opportunity of thanking him for all his hard work in keeping our Newsletter up to the standard that it is at present (and also for leaving a file of interesting contributions for this issue).

We would also like to congratulate the ladies who handled the production of the last Newsletter so efficiently. For a first effort this was magnificent and appreciated, we are sure, by all our members.

In this issue we publish reports on the Raptor Survey and the Hartlaub's Gull Enquiry. For the benefit of the newer members of our Club, and as a reminder to members of longer standing, we hope to publish further information in future Newsletters on the various activities in which Club members can (and should) partake. These will be supplemented by talks at the evening meetings. May we remind you of the request for help in the Pelican Survey in the last Newsletter—this is another field in which you can become active.

## TWO IMPORTANT DATES

Members are reminded that the Annual Dinner will be held at St. James Hotel on Friday, 21 May—the full announcement for this event appears in the last Newsletter. The Annual General Meeting will be held on June 11. A separate notice will be sent out to members. There are no other evening meetings, apart from these two, for May and June.

## CLUB ACTIVITIES

### Kariba. Friday March 26.

George Begg is very well known indeed to those who so faithfully turn up at Marina de Gama for the monthly counts. They know him as a knowledgeable bird man with a particularly balanced outlook when the more distrustful members express their feelings about habitat destruction... myself, for example. But George's job is not primarily a birdman's job; he is professionally an ecologist specialising in water problems and was working on them for eight years at Kariba before he came to the Cape to involve us in the ecological problems of Marina da Gama. It was about Kariba that he spoke to us on March 26 and provided one of the most stimulating evenings we have enjoyed for a long time.

His account of the impact of so gigantic a venture as the creation of this vast lake, not only on the existence of the vegetation and wildlife, but on the rhythmic patterns imposed on it by the erratic fluctuations of the Zambesi, now stopped...if not forever, at least until the dam wall collapses (??)...made a depressing picture. It has been clear to many of us for some time that planners and engineers believe that upsets to the environment will, in time, readjust themselves and that, bar the actual area they have taken over, things will eventually go back to what they were. Very few people...let alone engineers and planners know that most animals are like automats in that their whole life is conditioned by the inheritance from aeons of past generations and that their age-long routines are hard-set; these routines once broken cannot be revised to cope with new circumstances, so that in the profit and loss account of every economic gain there is an irreversible ecological loss.

The lesson from George Begg's talk is just that. Whether there will ever be any reconciliation between the demands of government and industry and the long-term essentials for planetary survival remains to be seen. But at present, the outlook seems gloomy.

P.T.

#### Camp at Bottelary, Langebaan Lagoen (20/21 March)

About 50 members attended the weekend camp at this delightful spot, and once again the weather was superb. The usual wader species were seen, including many Curlew Sandpipers and Grey Plovers showing well advanced breeding plumage, before the flight north. Other waders noted included Knots, Ringed Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Sanderling, Turnstone. In the bush around the homestead an unusual sight was that of several hundred Wattled Starlings flying in to roost in the stand of gum trees alongside the road. As a finale, on the Sunday afternoon, a pair of Black Stork were seen circling slowly and descending towards the marshes.

#### Paardevlei (10 April)

A good turn out of members enjoyed a short walk along the shore of the vlei. Many members were lucky enough to have a close up view of a Spotted Flycatcher, hawking insects from a low perch on the vlei shore. Apart from this, the usual vlei species were seen, although numbers were rather low.

#### Marina Da Gama.

Further to the report on the January and February counts published in the last newsletter—which show a decline in numbers from the previous year—the report for March shows an even greater decline. In March last year 4 367 birds (70 species) were counted. This represented the highest total of the year. The March count for this year totalled 2 057 birds (76 species). There were, however, three new records for the area:—One Grey-headed Gull, two Black Stork and a male Malechite Sunbird.

#### HARTLAUB'S GULL ENQUIRY

Although this project has not received much publicity of late, it is making good progress. A small band of dedicated gull-counters have checked the legs of 36 781 Hartlaub's Gulls, of which 2 381 bore rings. 1 190 of these had colour rings from the years 1972, 1974 and 1975. The remaining 1 191 birds seen with rings had been ringed in other years. These figures include all counts received by April 6, 1976. The earliest counts are dated May 21, 1974.

The biggest contributor has been Mrs. Joan Love—who has counted the staggering total of 17 154 gulls. A magnificent effort, for which we as organisers are extremely grateful. What is more, Mrs. Love's counts are spread out evenly throughout the year and this makes them even more valuable.

Next in line, George and Les Underhill have counted 7 194—our counts are not so useful because we have sporadic bursts of great activity. Miss Norah Williams has a total of 4 060, counted mainly on the Black River near Kodak. Mrs. Linda Wilson has regularly counted the gulls at Table View Beach—attracting a flock of gulls with scraps thrown out on her way to school—her total is 1 496.

The best counted place is the Liesbeek River opposite Hartleyvale. No less than 14 215 gulls have been counted there! In fact 83% of all gull counting has been done in what we have come to call the "Central Peninsula"—the coast between Hout Bay and Blouberg, the Liesbeek and Black Rivers and the Southern Suburbs as far south as Wynberg.

The above facts reveal that there is room for a lot more counters, and there is a lot of room for them to count in. We outline a few of the areas from which we need counts below:

1) Counts from any areas of the Central Peninsula (except perhaps Hartleyvale, which is getting pretty well covered) will help to give us a more balanced coverage of the "central" area. There is an especial need for regular counters in Sea Point, Green Point, Camps Bay. For those of you at school, what about your sports fields, especially during the coming winter months?

2) The Southern Peninsula—Kommetjie, Cape Point Reserve, Fish Hoek, Kalk Bay, Muizenberg, Strandfontein—is irregularly covered at present. We need some resident observers—but a lot of infrequent visitors who count when they can is almost as good.

3) The Northern Suburbs. We don't have a single count from these areas, although a few of our colour ringed gulls have been recovered here. Roadside cafes and sportsfields will probably provide the best counting spots.

4) The Southern Coast. We have only a handful of counts for the coastline from the Strand through Hermanus to the limit of the range of the Hartlaub's Gull at about Cape Infanta. All counts, of no matter how few birds, are very acceptable.

5) The West Coast. So far a grand total of 1 178 birds have been counted north of Blouberg. That's really thin. There are counting opportunities at each of the villages along the coast, both at the holiday resorts and the fishing industry settlements.

The aim of all this counting is not really to count how many gulls there are, but rather to determine the proportion of colour-ringed birds from each year in the total population. This information will be used for further statistical analysis. Because we are primarily interested in the number of gulls that have to be examined to find a colour ring, individual sightings of colour-ringed birds should only be reported from distant places.

To date, the furthest afield that a 1974 ringed bird has been seen is St. Helena Bay (30/1/76 Les Underhill) in the north and Hermanus (30/8/75 Joan Love) in the east. 1975 gulls seem to have been spotted sooner and further afield. The most northerly record on the west coast is from Lambert's Bay (8/12/75 George Underhill and 15/1/76 Carl Vernon) with another distant sighting near Saldanha Bay (14/1/76 Roy Siegfried). The most easterly sighting is at Onrus (21/1/76 Steve Baron).

If you would like to participate in this project, count forms and an explanation on how to use them (which is very simple), are available at evening meetings from George or Les Underhill. Alternatively we are contactable at 65-5698 or 12 Roseberry Road, Mowbray.

By the time you read this, gull ringing will be well underway, there will be one more colour to look for and gull counting will become an increasingly rewarding activity.

RARE BIRDS OF PREY

In the previous issue of the CBC Newsletter, No. 121, mention was made of a raptor survey being carried out by the Department of Nature and Environmental Conservation. Dr. Andre Boshoff, who is conducting this survey, has come forward with more details regarding the project and appeals to all members for help over the next two years—the duration of the initial phase of the project. This phase concerns the determination of future research priorities on the larger birds of prey and vultures and for this it is essential to gather up to date data on their status, distribution and feeding habits.

Certain species are highly persecuted by stock farmers and as a result are seriously decreasing in numbers, e.g. Martial Eagle, Cape Vulture, while others are not as common as past distribution records suggest, e.g. Bateleur, Egyptian Vulture.

To obtain this vital information, the Department is sending a questionnaire to each farmer in the Cape Province (31 000) asking whether any of the birds listed below are:

- (a) seen on their farm(s)
- (b) nesting on their farm(s)
- (c) killing livestock on their farm(s)—and, if so, what is killed.

To aid identification, an attractive full-colour leaflet depicting the 12 chosen birds will be sent out with the questionnaire. Copies of the leaflet together with questionnaire will be distributed at the next Club Meeting to those wanting them.

Andre Boshoff feels that, in addition to this appeal to farmers, the CBC, both inside and outside the CBC area, can provide invaluable aid.

Information needed on the birds is as follows (if available):

- (1) Species (2) Age (Adult/Sub-adult) (3) Numbers (4) Activity (flapping, soaring, perching, dead, etc.) (5) Locality (6) Date
- (7) Prey details (if applicable).

The 12 birds to be studied are:- Black Eagle (R133), Crowned Eagle (R143), Tawny Eagle (R134), Long-crested Eagle (R138), Fish Eagle (R149), Bateleur Eagle (R151), Martial Eagle (R142), Black-breasted Snake-Eagle (R146), Cape Vulture (R106), Lappet-faced (Black) Vulture (R108), Egyptian Vulture (R111), Bearded Vulture (Lammergeyer) (R150)

Dr. Boshoff expresses his appreciation in anticipation and asks that information be sent either to him at "Department of Nature and Environmental Conservation, Private Bag 5014, Stellenbosch 7600", or to The Editor of the newsletter.

Persons who assist Dr. Boshoff will each receive a summarized version of the results of the project after it has been completed.

REPORTS AND OBSERVATIONS1. Sightings

Saturday 3 April '76 4 p.m. A pair of GROUND WOODPECKER (445). Table Mountain, Cecilia Gorge, N. side about 1000 ft. I've not seen any on the mountain for years so this might be worth recording.

PHILIP TONGUE

YELLOW WAGTAIL (689). One seen at Strandfontein on 8 March.

PARADISE FLYCATCHER (682). One seen at the top of Warren Street, Tamboerskloof, on 1 April. It had no tail feathers at all.

ALF BROWN

FISH EAGLE (149).. During the last week of January Ron Mew and I observed a couple at the Sewage Farm in Daljosaphat.

TIELMAN AND ESTER HAUMANN

ARCTIC SKUA (284). At least three, including one light-phase bird, were pursuing terns in Hermanus Harbour on 18.3.76. I also saw one pursuing a tern offshore near Hermanus on 18.4.76. According to Roberts the species

PROGRAMME

MAY - JULY 1976

Please diarise these items.

EVENING MEETINGS

Friday May 21.

ANNUAL DINNER. A form was enclosed with the last Newsletter. This must be returned to Mrs. N. Davis not later than May 18 with a payment of R4.25 for each person attending.

Friday June 11.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. The Annual General Meeting will be held on this date. A separate notice has been sent out to members. At the completion of the A.G.M. the film "The Living Savannah" will be screened. This is a particularly good film on bird and animal conservation in East Africa.

PLEASE NOTE that there will be no Evening Meeting in July and that August 20 will be a Members' Evening. Please contact Stan Clarke (69 Pluto Rd. Plumstead 7800. Phone 71-2745) about your contribution to it.

FIELD EXCURSIONS

Sunday May 16.

VERGELEGEN. Go along the N.2. and take the Somerset West-Strand turnoff, turn left again and proceed to the traffic lights. Turn right here towards Somerset West. At the first set of traffic lights you come to, turn left along Lourensford Road. Continue for about 3 km until you see the CBC sign at Vergelegen entrance on the right-hand side of the road.  
LEADER: Pat Lockhart.  
9.30 a.m. 15 min. allowed for latecomers.  
Those arriving after that will have difficulty finding the way.

Saturday June 5.

RONDEVLEI. Go down Prince George Drive and turn left at the first robot after Plumstead, into 5th Avenue. Turn right at the Rondevlei Notice Board into Perth Road and proceed to the Entrance Gate.  
LEADER: Alan Morris. Meet at Entrance Gate at 2.30 p.m.  
Please be on time.

PLEASE NOTE that there will be no Field Excursion in July.

MARINA DA GAMA

Counts will be held on May 9, June 13 and July 11 (the second Sunday of each month).

occurs "from September to January and probably later".

LESSER CRESTED TERN (297). One in company with Swift and Sandwich Terns at Hermanus Harbour on 25.3.76. It was also seen by Mr. & Mrs. Dale on 26.3.76. and subsequently, and was present at least until 15.4.76. The bird was fractionally smaller than the Sandwich Tern, while the tail was proportionately shorter, and the bill markedly more orange, than those of the Swift Tern. Roberts gives it as regular down the east coast to Zululand with a single specimen recorded from Knysna.

WHITE-BACKED DUCK (104). I am a little disturbed by the Editorial comment on Dr. H. Gottschalk's note on the breeding of this species at Faure, in that it appears to imply that the CBC Checklist is the sole criterion by which records are judged. The Checklist describes the White-Backed Duck as "uncommon and local", of uncertain status, and "probably only a straggler from further north". Roberts calls it an "uncommon resident all over Southern Africa", while the African Handbook gives it as "a common diving duck". The distribution maps in both text-books also clearly indicate its regular occurrence throughout the Republic. Why, therefore, should the outdated and (in this instance) misleading Checklist take precedence over the major standard works? Where there is disagreement, should this not be indicated? The very last thing I would wish to do would be to deprecate Dr. Gottschalk's most useful record, but if the sighting of this pair at Faure on January 8 is to be regarded as "quite a find", I have been extraordinarily lucky (and somewhat remiss, to boot!) as to my personal knowledge the Faure birds have been there at least since last October. I have seen the species also at Rondevlei and Muizenberg Sewage Works within the last two years, and on the evidence of the standard text-books, did not think them sufficiently unusual to report.

GREY-HEADED GULL (288). One at Hermanus Harbour on 18.3.76. The bird was present at least until 29.3.76, and was also seen on 26.3.76 by fellow Club members, Mr. & Mrs. J. Dale. It is described in Roberts as being "absent from coastal areas between Walvis Bay and Port Elizabeth except for vagrants".

BROWN-HOODED KINGFISHER (402). One seen near Stanford on 22.2.76. Mentioned in Roberts as occurring "from Swellendam eastwards..."

E.L. ROBERTS, HERMANUS.

(The last two sightings have been reported previously but are nevertheless interesting confirmations. Ed.)

BLACK CUCKOO. In December 1975, at Geelbek Farm, Langebaan Lagoon, I flushed this bird off the ground just outside some derelict farm buildings. It flew up and perched on a horizontal rainwater pipe, where I had a splendid view of it for at least five minutes, before it flew off.

T.D. LONGRIGG

Editors' note on the Glossy Ibis:

Many reports of sightings of this species have been sent in over the past few years for the Rondevlei-Zeekoevlei-Strandfontein complex, and we think that the bird can now be regarded as locally resident. Therefore it has been decided not to report further sightings in this area, but any reports of evidence of breeding would be most welcome!

2. Breeding

SWIFT TERN (293). Breeding on the big island in one of the ponds at Strandfontein. I was there on 21st April and counted 27 young of various sizes but all still very small.

ALF. BROWN

YOUNG DIEDERIK AT RONDEBOSCH 20.4.76. Mrs. E. Smuts reports watching a Diederik Cuckoo in her garden flying back and forth carrying caterpillars.