

NEWSLETTER

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Now is the time of the year when every member should be busy completing cards for all the nests found during the last breeding season. Thus Professor Winterbottom's plea just comes at the right time to remind us of our duty; he writes:

I have been horrified to learn that several of our leading contributors of Nest Record Cards have given up filling in cards except for the rarer birds. This betrays a complete misunderstanding of the whole purpose of these cards. Last year, for the first time in the South Western Cape or anywhere else in Africa, we had a collection of cards big enough to give us a real picture of breeding in one breeding season. If we don't get a similar collection for this and the next few years, most of the value of this very fine effort will be thrown away because there is no comparative material. Then there is a second point: I won't say we don't want cards for rarer species - of course we do - but we don't want them half as much as we want cards for common species. Only for common birds can we hope to get enough cards to work out, for instance, annual and/or regional variation in the breeding season. Therefore, a card for a Mossie's nest is much more valuable than one for a White-winged Seedeater and we would rather have a card for a Wagtail than one for a Flufftail. So please, dear Member, if you don't feel able to fill in cards for every nest you find, let us have cards for Mossies, Wagtails, Fiscals and Turtle Doves and leave the rarities for somebody more energetic to record.

GLOSSY IBIS AT STRANDFONTEIN.

The Glossy Ibis certainly make the most sensational news in our area. A group of 14 of these birds in full breeding plumage was first seen by Mr. Ferguson at the roadside east of Zeekoevlei on 14th November, 1967. They were feeding in the shallow water of a grassy pond together with 4 Sacred Ibis, 1 Yellow-billed Egret and about 30 Cattle Egrets. According to Professor Winterbottom these are the first Glossy Ibis reported in the Cape Peninsula since the Rondevlei pair in 1955.

On 15 November Mrs. Anderson and Mrs. Munro saw this group of 14 Glossy Ibis at the Strandfontein Sewage Farm, where smaller groups of these birds have been seen since by many of our members. Mr. Ferguson saw two there on 12th December; Messrs Brown and Morris saw four on 16th December. When I heard the good news, I went there with Stephen Pringle



and we were lucky to see a group of four feeding so near the road that Stephen was able to take a good colour slide of them from the car. This 13th December was really a lucky day for us. At another pan of the Sewage Farm we had a perfect view of two Whistling Duck; they even whistled for us when they flew past before settling on the water.

Mr. Tongue reports: On the farm Kersefontein, Hopefield, on 29 October, there were 8 Glossy Ibis in the reeds by a seasonal pond. Seen by myself and Mr. A. Hartley, the latter waded out to the place where they were seen and found that sticks etc. were being carried for nest-building. This is the farm where Spoonbills were "discovered" by Mr. Wilson in 1956. There were, by the way, at least 80 Spoonbill chicks there.

Miss. N. Williams saw a Glossy Ibis at Riet Vlei on 26 November.

HOUSE SPARROW INVADES CITY.

Professor Winterbottom saw a male and a female House Sparrow at the top of Queen Victoria Street, close to the South African Museum, on 5th October, 1967. Although this Sparrow has been recorded from some of the suburbs for several years, he believes this is the first record for central Cape Town.

CHAFFINCHES.

Mr. Underhill's note about the Chaffinch in Newsletter 85 has brought in some more records:

Mr. Ferguson, on 5th November, found two Chaffinches singing in the oak-trees near Groot Constantia. Several years ago, he used to notice them near the Rhodes Memorial, but has not seen or heard them there again until this summer.

Mr. Tongue reports that, in spite of keeping his eyes open, he had not seen one Chaffinch last year until the morning of 26th December. This was a very fine male, in splendid bright plumage, on an oak in Newlands Forest, just off Union Avenue, above the Paradise Road traffic lights.

Mr. Tongue also reports that there is a pair of Ground Woodpeckers nearly always to be seen just by the new cableway near Cecilia Plantation on the Bridle Path up Table Mountain. He has seen them there for at least six years and although he had missed them since the beginning of 1967, he saw them again on 17th December.

WILLOW WARBLER.

On 11th November, 1967, Mr. Ferguson heard and saw a Willow Warbler as it characteristically moved about delicately in a small clump of wattles a short distance below the Sheik Josef Kramat on the Eerste River. This is the first time he has come across it in the Western Province, but he knows the bird well from the Border Area. Perhaps our members not familiar with it should be told that the persistent call is a not-very-loud and distinctive Tee-wéet.

The 1963 Check List gives it for Hottentots Holland and Peninsula only. Apart from the call it can very easily be overlooked.

OBSERVATIONS AT PAARDEVLEI.

Mr. Lockhart reports: During a walk around Paardevlei near Somerset West on 22nd September, 1967, I was fortunate to see a pair of Fish Eagles flying around hunting and settling on willow trees, giving their unforgettable calls. While observing them I had a clear view of one House Martin which I have never before observed at Paardevlei. A Giant Kingfisher was another unusual sighting. Cattle Egrets, African Darters, Reed Cormorants, Black-headed Heron and possibly Night Herons as well as Cape Weavers and Red Bishop Birds are all breeding there in colonies.

On 18th October I was surprised to see a magnificent Fish Eagle wheeling over the Vlei and having to take continuous evasive action as a persistent and raucous Hartlaub's Gull dive-bombed it. Although there were several other gulls on the Vlei, they did not join in the fun. This harrying of the Fish Eagle went on for a good ten minutes and the lone gull only broke off the engagement when the eagle soared out of sight into some cloud.

Two of the Reed Cormorants had nests very close to each other on branches of Weeping Willows 60 ft above water. One hungry juvenile ventured over to the next door nest while the parent of this nest was feeding its young. As the intruder entered the nest, beak gaping open to receive some food, the adult bird and two young turned on him, pecking furiously, and he beat a very rapid and undignified retreat. Three Darter nests had four young each which were quite large and the parent birds were hard put to satisfy their voracious appetites. In colouring the chicks offered a complete contrast to their sombre parents. These young were white with black-lined wings and brown heads, but were not so very much smaller than their parents.

At his farm Ridge Acres, Somerset West, Mr. Lockhart observed a pair of Didric Cuckoo on 13th November, these were the first he had ever seen there after 15 years' residence. Both birds were calling to each other and the male bird called for some time sitting on a telephone wire. He also gave a distinctive gliding display and was mobbed at one time by three Cape Mossies. The Cuckoos were seen again on 21st November and 1st December, 1967.

KLAAS'S CUCKOO - WINTER RECORDS.

With reference to the note in Newsletter No. 85, Mr. Ferguson reports:

Over the last ten years I have had records of this cuckoo for every winter month - May, June, July, August. The largest number of records have been in July. I believe that some, at least, of these cuckoos are resident, and an unseasonably warm day or spell causes them to call, thus attracting our attention.

WHISKERED TERNS AT PHILIPPI.

After their unsuccessful breeding attempt in 1966 (cf. Newsletter 82) the terns returned in 1967. On 16th October Mr. Morris saw two at Jacobs Vlei. On 19 Nov. I saw two sitting on their nests in the same vlei where they had bred in 1966. From then on they were closely watched by Messrs. M. Waltner and H. Pfister who recorded four nests, one with two and three with three eggs. In the first two nests on which the birds had been sitting on 19 November, the first chick hatched on 6th December, the second of nest 1 and the second and third of nest 2 on 7th December. These five chicks survived for at least a fortnight,

although both groups of 2 and 3 chicks respectively were fed by only one adult bird each about a week after hatching. On 26th December Mr. Waltner saw one of the two chicks from nest 1 fly for about 40 yds. He also saw one of these fly away with the parent bird when the second was killed by a Marsh Harrier on 31st December. It is a pity that only one chick survived from four nests; nests 3 and 4 had been destroyed or deserted. Let us hope that these terns will return in 1968 and make a full success of their breeding.

GREY-HEADED GULLS AT FISH HOEK.

Miss N. Williams reports: There are two Grey-headed Gulls at the Dairy Den on the Main Road at Fish Hoek, feeding on scraps of food thrown out of cars for them. There are several other gulls showing faint signs of the outline of the head band and others with very, very pale grey heads. Does one presume, therefore, that the Grey-headed Gulls and the Hartlaubs are interbreeding?

RED-EYED DOVE IN CITY.

Miss N. Williams and Mr. John Perry watched a Red-eyed Dove build a nest and rear two young in the top of a tall cypress tree in the St. George's Cathedral grounds during October/November. From a window on the third floor of the Provincial Administration Building they had a very good view of the whole affair.

JACANAS AT PAARL.

On 13 June Misses Clark and Bayly saw two Jacanas at the Paarl Disposal Works. Mr. Siegfried saw one there on 17 Oct. In Newsletter 83 (April '67) I mentioned that somebody had promised me a report of Jacanas breeding at Paarl Sewage Farm, which I never received unfortunately. I wonder if anybody has recorded them breeding there in 1967. Would he or she please report it.

CLUB SLIDE LIBRARY.

Mr. A. Morris, Aurora, Main Road, Muizenberg, who is in charge of the Library, writes:

The Slide Library has a collection covering 98 species all found within our area. In many cases there are a number of slides of each species covering various aspects of the bird's life such as nesting, display etc.

This collection has been built up over many years through the generosity of our photographers but judging from the reports of the previous organizer it has only been borrowed on rare occasions. As Club Members you are all entitled to make use of it and there must be many occasions when it would be most useful; perhaps you give talks to some local group, elderly folk, youth groups, etc. Why not illustrate your talk with the Club slides? Not only will it be more interesting, but it is also good publicity for us.

The library, I feel, can be expanded to include views of the varied habitats within our area. Also some shots of the club's activities would be interesting.

If any member has slides to donate or would like to borrow the collection please phone me at 81884 - evenings only.

WATTLED STARLINGS.

Mr. Tongue reports: On 28th October, 1967, about 3 miles east of Darling on the Malmesbury road, a very large flock of Wattled Starlings, at least 500 birds. They were together with grazing sheep and many were perching on the animals' backs, in one case there were six birds on one sheep.

Mr. Siegfried found a colony of Wattled Starlings (at least 40 communal nesting structures) in a eucalyptus grove in wheat field about 2 miles west of Agter Paarl in direction Paardeberg. On 4 November juvenile birds were observed in and around the nests.

Mr. Ferguson saw 2 Wattled Starlings at Strandfontein Sewage Farm on 12th December. They were consorting with European Starlings with which species he had not seen them before.

BLACK-NECKED GREBE. ←

These birds have successfully nested at Strandfontein Sewage Farm in 1967. Mr. Ferguson saw 2 juveniles being fed on 12th December.

REGULATIONS RELATING TO WILD ANIMALS, INDI-
GENOUS PLANTS, INLAND FISHERIES AND NATURE RESERVES.

The attention of members is drawn to the above regulations which were published under Provincial Notice 892/1967 on 17th November. A copy was sent to the Committee and may be consulted by interested members.

I wish to thank all those members who contributed to the Newsletter in 1967, and also Mr. Morgan who prepared the envelopes for distribution.

Good birding to all members in 1968.