

THE CAPE BIRD CLUB.

News Letter No. 57.

June 1960.

Editor: R.K.Schmidt,
Striegau,
54, Lympleigh Rd.,
Plumstead.

In the previous News Letter Mrs. A.G. Hooper from Stellenbosch asked for information about the singing of Bokmakieries and for advice about the feeding of young birds. This request has brought interesting replies.

Mrs. M.K.Rowan would like to suggest a possible reason for all the singing and chasing, which has surprised Mrs. Hooper, so well beyond the end of the birds' normal breeding season. She writes:

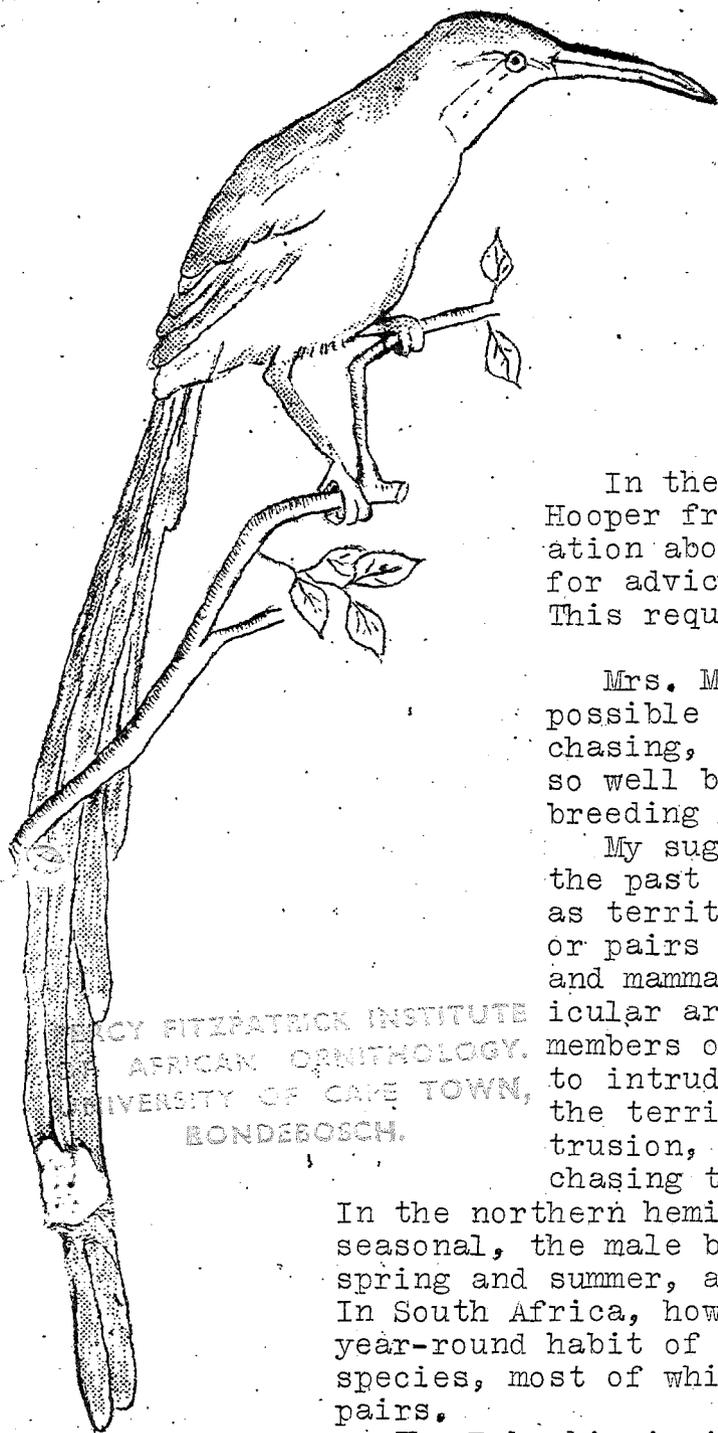
My suggestion derives from studies over the past ten years of the phenomenon known as territorialism, whereby individual males or pairs of many bird species (and reptiles and mammals also) establish a claim to a particular area on which they will allow no other members of the same species (except the mate) to intrude. They advertise their ownership of the territory, and defend it against such intrusion, mainly by singing, displaying and chasing trespassers. Actual fighting is rare.

In the northern hemisphere, territorialism is largely seasonal, the male bird occupying his freehold in spring and summer, and relinquishing it again in winter. In South Africa, however, territorialism is a permanent year-round habit of life in a surprising number of species, most of which live on their territories in pairs.

The Bokmakierie is one of these. The pairs, however, do not occupy exactly the same areas all the year round. Each tends to restrict its activities to a relatively small breeding territory during summer, and to move into a larger adjacent or overlapping area in winter. Accordingly, in regions where Bokmakieries are fairly common, one often notices disputes at about this time of the year (March/April), the object of these quarrels being to establish the borders of adjoining winter territories. The disputes are marked by much calling, chasing and advances of one bird upon another, often terminating in a sharp, bolt-upright stance, which displays to best advantage the bold colouring of the underparts.

Normally, border arguments do not involve more than two pairs, which would hardly be described as "a whole flock". But once, in Tokai, my own garden marked the junction of three adjoining winter territories, and I was astonished to discover how much noise six birds could make, and how their vigorous chasing seemed to multiply their numbers. Perhaps Mrs. Hooper is enjoying a similar experience.

Another thing which might contribute to the number of Bokmakieries in Mrs. Hooper's garden is the tendency of the young to attach themselves rather firmly to the parents, who seem to decide to dispense with this responsibility about the time they move into their winter-territory. When this happens, the adults may sing, display to and chase their offspring (which may be recognized by their less brilliant and more greenish plumage) in much the same way as they do to territorial competitors.



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It would be interesting to know whether Mrs. Hooper thinks that either or both of these possible explanations could fit her observations.

Miss Joan Robinson gives advice about the Feeding and Care of a Young Dove: This is quite easy, but requires time and patience which were worthwhile.

Early last July we found a baby Ring Dove about two days old, still in its nest among the branches of a felled tree. Hoping that the parents might return, we left it until dusk, by then the baby was nearly dead from cold. Taking it inside we placed it in a newspaper-lined basket with a lid covered with a light cloth near the fire. Returning from a meeting at 11 p.m. we expected to find a corpse, but found instead a lively perky youngster who then received his first feed.

I took a piece of bread and chewed it well, then a mouthful of milk, and mixed the two together. Inserting the bird's bill into my mouth I encouraged it to try and eat by pushing my tongue near its gape. After a short time it opened its bill and I pushed the bread and milk into it with my tongue until it began to eat by itself. When I judged it had had enough, I popped it back into the basket, covered it lightly and closed the lid. Next day and for several days I continued to feed it by mouth, giving it 6 - 7 small feeds per day. Then I added mixed birdseed to the mixture of bread and milk until it was eating well. As it got older I encouraged it to feed itself by putting bird seed and breadcrumbs on a paper on the floor and tapping the floor next to the food with my finger until eventually it started to peck at the food. Once it started to eat by itself, I cut down the number of feeds by mouth, until finally it refused to be fed in that way.

For the first few days it stayed at the bottom of the basket with the lid on. Then the basket was left open, and one day it was sitting on the edge of the basket. Soon it was out and about the room and was put into the basket only at night. As soon as it could really feed itself I put it into a pen during the day with plenty of food and water. When I thought it could fend for itself I let it free.

For a long time after it had been freed, it used to wander in and out of the house. Our three dogs and two cats had learnt to leave it alone. Often when the family was out in the garden, it would alight on their heads or shoulders. It would even allow me to pick it up when it was feeding near me. Lately it was a little shy of being touched, though it still alighted on us and came in at the kitchen window for its daily treat of mealies and cheese.

Then suddenly after nine months it left us. The last I saw of it was when it was flying off my sister's head towards the trees at sunset. Cuffie as we called him (by this time we had decided that he was a male, and he answered to his name too) was a most endearing pet and is greatly missed by everyone.

A very interesting observation comes from Mr. P.W. Nielsen who watched a Yellow Wagtail in the corner of Rietvlei which is nearest Blaauwberg Strand, on 29th May 1960. He knows the bird well from Denmark and clearly saw the grey head.

On April 24th, Mr. T.P. Pottinger put up a Black Duck from the little stream which flows through Echo Valley. He would like to know if there are any other records of this duck from Table Mountain.

On 6th April Miss C. von Weber saw a flock of 29 Sacred Ibis along the road about 7 miles this side of Langebaan.

During the Easter week-end Mrs. I. Taylor, in the Oudtshoorn district, watched a Bar-throated Apalis bathing in a thorn bush. It went through the usual bathing movements among the leaves which were wet with dew.

As my son has become a keen fisherman I spent the 1st of May at Rooikrantz near Cape Point instead of going to the Vergelegen Outing. Sugarbirds are plentiful at Rooikrantz, but I found then only one nest which was still in the beginning stage. Apart from this female I noticed no other birds building. Strange that this bird which had the choice

of the most beautiful Protea bushes built her nest in a cluster of Rooikrans trees about 8 ft from the ground. On 27th May I was at Rooikrantz again and found one young (just hatching) and one egg in this nest. On that day I found two more nests in an early stage of construction and saw a third female carrying building material. If one compares this with Vergelegen where there were many nests with eggs and young on 1st May, or Mr. Birnbaum's observations who found 5 nests on the mountain slope above Oranjezicht of which 2 contained young and 3 contained eggs on 28th May, it seems that the Rooikrantz Sugarbirds are rather late breeders. Has any member collected dates at some other place?

The two Larger Striped Swallow broods which I mentioned in News Letter No. 56 did not fly successfully. The cold rainy days in the beginning of April must have starved them so much that only one left the nest on 8th April (fledging period 27 days), but even this one was lying dead in the nest the following day. The other young were found dead in the nests.

From 6 to 18 April Mr. Morgan regularly saw White-winged Seedeaters in the Macchia bush in Bath Kloof, Montagu. Several pairs seemed to be present.

Here follows the Chairman's Report, as read at the Annual General Meeting, held on June 3rd 1960:

During the first month of this period Miss J. Robinson continued to act as Chairman and Dr. C.J. Uys as Hon. Secretary. The Club is very grateful to Miss Robinson and Dr. Uys to have taken over the duties of the Chairman and the Hon. Secretary during their absence while overseas. Mr. J. MacLeod was kind enough to take over from the Hon. Treasurer, while she was in Europe.

During the last half of the year the Committee lost the services of Dr. Uys, on his going overseas on study leave. This loss was felt very strongly, as Dr. Uys during his term of office, had come forward with many new and stimulating ideas.

During the past year the Committee met eight times and as usual these meetings were well attended, showing once again that Committee-members took their responsibility serious.

Of the topics discussed during the different Committee Meetings the following are some of the more important ones:

- a) The organising of an exhibition of Bird Photography. The exhibition was eventually held during the whole month of January in the Exhibition Hall at Shell House. The event was very popular and visited by many. It certainly was a fine credit to Dr. Uys, the organiser and the Shell Company, who cooperated in every respect.
- b) The launching of an investigation into the Breeding Colonies of the Red Bishop Bird in the vicinity of Cape Town. This scheme was originally suggested by Dr. J.M. Winterbottom. The Committee took it up and approached Mr. H.K. Morgan with the request to act as organiser and record-keeper. Mr. Morgan accepted and in doing so deserves the Club's sincere thanks.
- c) The drawing up of a year's programme of Evening Meetings and Field outings. It was felt that the time had come to give members of the Club at the beginning of the year a list of the year's Club Events with the dates. Such a programme for 1960 was drafted and distributed among members.
- d) The Sir Llewelyn Andersson Bequest Essay Competition. The Council of the S.A. Ornithological Society once again asked the Cape Bird Club to organise this Competition for the Schools. After the Committee had found Miss M. Johns willing to accept she was nominated as Organiser.

- e) Requests for affiliation from the Cape Town and District Avicultural Club. It was decided that this request could not be granted. Members of the Avicultural Club are invited to join the Cape Bird Club.
- f) The Construction of a road crossing Riet Vlei. The Committee discussed this point and decided to approach the Department of Nature Conservation for that Department's view on the matter. This item is still on the agenda.
- g) Formation of Records Sub-Committee. A suggestion by Dr. J.M. Winterbottom for the formation of a Record's Sub-Committee which duty it would be to check and confirm important records by Club members, was discussed and supported. Such a Committee has now been appointed and has been announced in the last News Sheet.

Sub-committees and Organisers.

Mr. John Martin and Mr. Jack MacLeod again organised outings in their usual efficient way. They were assisted by Mr. Clarke and Mr. Schmidt. That these outings were appreciated by the club members was shown by the large number of members attending them. Miss Ethelston again organised lifts for people who required transport. Mrs. Knipe took on the most unrewarding task of providing the tea during the Evening Meetings. She certainly deserves a most hearty thank you from the Club.

Mr. Schmidt acted as Editor of the News Sheet. During the period under review four News Sheets appeared. Mr. John Martin continued to act as Organiser of the Nest Record Scheme. Dr. Winterbottom of the Field card Species Occurrence Scheme, Dr. Broekhuysen as Migration Record Keeper and organiser of issue of Rings, Mr. S. Clarke as Recorder of Observations on Behaviour, while Dr. Uys was in charge of the Club's Slide Library.

Evening Meetings:

Nine Evening Meetings were held. At the first meeting Dr. Broekhuysen spoke on the work he had done together with Dr. Tinbergen on the Shell-removing habit in the Black-headed Gull, in the Ravensglass breeding colony in Britain. At the second Professor Berlioz from the Natural History Museum in Paris gave a most interesting talk on Sun-birds. At the third Mr. R.A. Brown talked about his methods of catching European Swallows for ringing purposes. The fourth was a Social Evening and members could ask questions etc. At the fifth Mr. R. Attwell from the Northern Rhodesian Game Department, talked about Bird Life in Northern Rhodesia and screened an outstanding 16 mm colour film on the topic. At the sixth Mr. J. Martin talked on the Technique of Nest-finding and this was followed by Mr. Stanford screening some of his very good colour-transparencies. Both items on the programme were very much appreciated. At the seventh Mr. J. Perry talked on the Contribution Aviculture can make to our Knowledge of Wild Birds and this was followed by the screening of Dr. Broekhuysen's film Birds of the Sea Shore. At the eighth Dr. L.E. Richdale from New Zealand talked on the Royal Albatross and at the ninth Meeting, Dr. M. Gilham from Britain discussed The Ecology of Bird Islands. Her talk was illustrated by almost perfect colour transparencies, mainly taken in New Zealand and Australia.

All meetings were well attended.

Field Outings:

The Club had nine Field Outings during the past year. The areas visited were: Steenbras River Mouth, Klipheuvel, Klavervlei, Goede Ontmoeting, Major Diggle's Farm Kilcairn, Berste Rivier, Kersefontein near the Berg River Mouth, Vergelegen, Somerset West and Skrywershoek.

As mentioned before in this report the field outings were very popular.

Investigations:

The following investigations are being carried out by members of the Club:

- a) Survey of the Breeding Behaviour of the Larger Stripe-breasted Swallow by R.K.Schmidt and G.J.Broekhuysen, with the cooperation of Mr. J. Martin.
- b) A Study of the Malachite Sunbird at "Malachite Bush" on the farm Vergelegen at Somerset West by Mr. J. MacLeod.
- c) Ringing and colour-marking and the collecting of data on moult and weight of the European Swallow in the vicinity of Cape Town by A.R. Brown and G.J.Broekhuysen.
- d) Survey of Red Bishop Bird Colonies within the vicinity of Cape Town. Organiser Mr. H.Morgan.
- e) Bird Road Casualties on the roads in the Cape Province. Organiser G.J.Broekhuysen.

Membership:

The membership now stands at 239.

In ending this report I again have great pleasure in thanking my fellow members in the Committee for their enthusiasm. The Hon. Secretary and the Hon. Treasurer and those who served in the different Sub-Committees deserve a special word of thank. The Club's financial book was audited by Mr. Jack MacLeod for which our best thanks. Once again the Department of Zoology has given its facilities in the form of Lecture Hall, projectors, etc. and we like to thank the head of the Department of Zoology, Professor Day, most heartily for making his Department available to the Cape Bird Club.

G.J.Broekhuysen,
Chairman.

REPORT ON NEST RECORDS - 1959.

During the year 1959, members of the Cape Bird Club sent in 854 new nest record cards as compared with 880 cards for the corresponding period last year, but these cards reflected a total of 1098 nests in all, considerably more than the previous year. This increase is partly due to the interest being taken in the Red Bishopbird Survey conducted by Mr. Morgan, a single card from one party reflecting 19 Red Bishop nests and another card 24 nests, and partly due to single cards being sent in for colonies of Cormorants and a colony of Avocets. Fifty-four persons contributed to the scheme, being four less than last year. Four members each sent in more than 100 cards.

The Knysna Scrub Warbler nest was recorded for the first time in our area by Jan and Pierre Hofmeyr and Mr. A.R.Brown sent in two cards for the Lark-like Bunting, each nest having three eggs. Two seldom-recorded nests were those of the Water-Dikkop, a card each from Mr. Brown and Mr. A.Morris. Other nests of interest are those of the Maccoa Duck (6) of which Mr. Morris sent in four, and Black-necked Grebe (9) from Messrs Brown and Morris. A card for the nest of the Purple Gallinule found at Klavervlei by Peter Steyn, and a new nesting record for Grey-headed Gulls found in the Bredasdorp area are of particular importance. Here, too, Spoonbills were found nesting and cinefilms of the birds at, and on their nests were shown to us by our chairman some time ago.

A Grey-backed Finch Lark nest with eggs was found by Mr. Brown, and a Clapper Lark nest with eggs by Jack MacLeod and J. Martin. No less than four cards for Long-billed Lark were received - a nest seldom found. These cards were sent in by Jack MacLeod (2), Dr. Winterbottom and Mr. E. Ashforth.

Mrs. Knipe with 79 nests was far ahead of the next lady member and among Junior members Richard Winterbottom, David Knipe and Robert Martin were the biggest contributors.

I should have pointed out that there were 107 species recorded nesting this year as against 101 for the previous season. Another nest of interest was that of the Cape Robin found in Picnic Bush, Somerset West by Jack MacLeod and Maurice Halleck, containing the egg of the Piet My Vrou. The young Cuckoo duly hatched, was photographed by members of our Club and pictures were shown to us at one of our meetings. Members are once again asked to continue to send in all nest cards.

To those who have contributed to this scheme - MANY THANKS.

J. Martin,
Organiser.

CONTRIBUTORS TO NEST RECORD SCHEME. 1959.

Alais, Mrs.	1	MacLeod, Mr. J.	179
Ashforth, Mr. E.	14	" Miss C.	6
Attwell, Mr. R.J.G.	52	McLeod, Mr. N.	11
Birnbaum, Dr. F.W.H.	6	Martin, Mr. J.	202
Bisshop, Mrs.	1	" Mrs. E.	1
Broekhuysen, Dr. G.J.	19	" Robert	99
" Mrs. M.	4	Middlemiss, Mr. E.	196
Brooks, Mr. J.	12	Morgan, Mrs.	2
Brown, Mr. A.P.	97	Morris, Mr. A.	32
Clarke, Mr. S.	5	Myburgh, Mr. Nico	1
Davidson, Mrs. M.	3	Norgarb, Mr. C.	2
Doubell, Mr.	1	Pelteret, David	4
Du Toit, Mr. B.	10	Robinson, Miss C.	5
Eaton, Mr. A.	30	" " E.B.	9
Ethelston, Miss J.	1	" " J.	2
Halleck, Mr. M.	25	Schmidt, Mr. R.K.	39
Hendry, Paul	5	Stanford, Mr. W.P.	1
Hoal, Mr. B.W.T.	3	Steyn, Mr. Peter	49
Hofmeyr, Mr. J.	10	Taylor, Mrs. I.	28
" P.	2	Urquart, Colin	2
Ivason, Mrs. D.	1	Uys, Dr. C.J.	102
Knipe, Mrs. S.L.	79	" Paul	4
" David	25	" Peter	8
Leipoldt, Miss L.	1	Wilson, Mr. A.H.	5
Lello, E.	1	Winterbottom, Dr. J.M.	48
Lor, Peter	3	" Richard	25
MacKenzie, Mr. B.	4	Zoutendyk, Mr. P.	6

SURVEY OF RED BISHOP (EUFLECTES ORIX)

Interim Report.

The decision to undertake the survey was made on the 7th August 1959 and after the birds had begun their breeding cycle.

The survey was therefore directed towards locating breeding colonies and getting some idea of their extent. The proposed census area within a radius of 10 miles from Bellville narrowly excludes some promising areas. Through the medium of the News Sheet members were asked to complete a simple questionnaire and not to adhere too strictly to the proposed limits.

Nineteen questionnaires were returned. Two were well outside the proposed area and only seven were inside the ten mile limit. With the exception of the large population on the Mosselbank River these colonies all centre round the Diep River at Vissershok. The birds showed at least one unexpected preference by nesting in small isolated waterlogged quarries.

It is difficult to believe that this is a true indication of the extent of the population. If we are to establish the true position the whole area will have to be traversed. Unless we can get the utmost assistance from members and a considerable amount of help from interested landowners we are not likely to achieve this.

Two friends from the Rhodesias have been kind enough to write expressing interest and raising queries which we may be able to answer at a later date.

H.K.Morgan.
Organiser.

CAPE BIRD CLUB RINGING REPORT FOR THE
PERIOD 1 JULY 1959 - 3 JUNE 1960.

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>NUMBERS RINGED</u>	<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>NUMBERS RINGED</u>
<u>Duck</u>		<u>Other birds</u>	
Cape Shoveler	1	Black Eagle	1
<u>Fresh Water Birds</u>		Cape Vulture	1
Spoonbills	7	Banded Harrier Hawk	1
Black-necked Heron	2	Fish Eagle	1
<u>Sea Birds</u>		Yellow-billed Kite	3
Common Tern	1	Spotted Eagle Owl	3
Black-browed Albatross	1	Paradise Flycatcher	3
Cape Cormorant	1	Dusky Flycatcher	1
<u>Doves and Pigeons</u>		Cape Batis	2
Cape Turtle Dove	51	Fiscal Flycatcher	3
Laughing Dove	87	Long-billed Lark	3
<u>Swallows</u>		Rufous-capped Lark	2
Pearl-breasted Swallow	5	Piet-my-vrou	1
Larger Striped Swallow	73	White-eye	1
White-throated Swallow	20	Cape Thrush	2
European Swallow	342	Bokmakierie	1
Sand Martin	34	Cape Robin	6
Rock Martin	10	Hoopoe	2
		Bee-eater	46
		Cape Mossie	107
		Red Bishopbird	6
		Crowned Lapwing	1
		Malachite Sunbird	19
		Total	851

This total is higher than last year's total when during the period from June 20th - July 1st 803 birds were ringed. The total number of species involved is 37. Mr. Brown and his son ringed this year again large numbers of European Swallows but the total number they caught this year was smaller than last year's. In addition to what the Browns caught, a number of European Swallows were caught by a team of Cape Bird Club Members (including Mr. Brown and son) at Alderman's Farm, where during several evenings these birds came to sleep in the reeds.

While catching the European Swallows at the Athlone Sewage Farm, Mr. Brown and his son recovered some birds which were ringed the previous year at more or less the same spot. One of their swallows was recovered in the northern tip of the Congo near Lake Albert.

The number of European Bee-eaters ringed this year was 46, more than twice as many as in the previous year. This is due to improved catching technique and it is hoped to ring considerably more in the coming season. The number of Larger Stripe-breasted Swallows (73) is nearly six times as high as the number for last year. This again is the result of a new catching technique which was developed in Johannesburg originally and has been in use with the Witwatersrand Bird Club for quite a while.

The number of cuckoos ringed is again very small and members are requested to try to improve this situation.