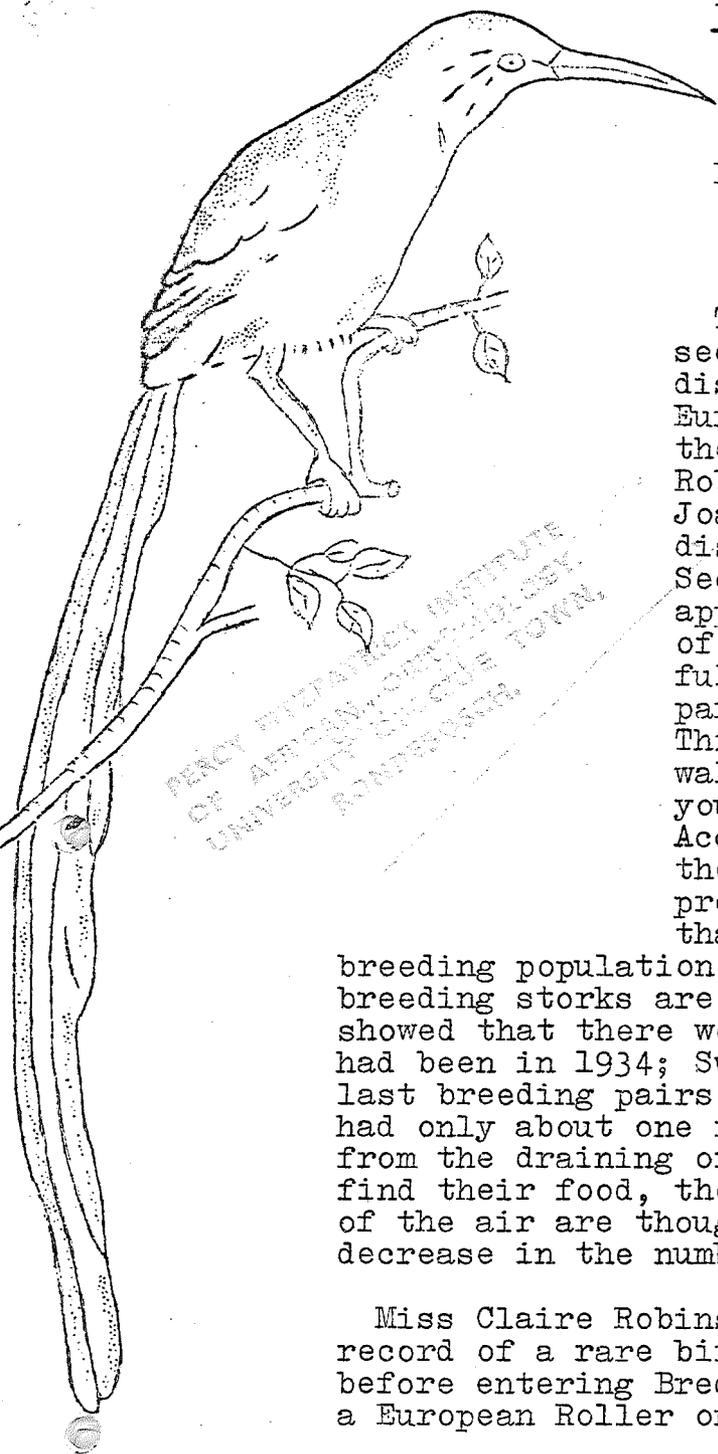


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BONENBRACH

The most surprising news always seems to come from the Bredasdorp district. The latest is that the European White Stork is nesting there. On 29th November, 1961 Mr. Robbie Martin, Mrs. Martin and Miss Joan Robinson spotted a nest in the distance which they thought to be a Secretary Bird's nest. When they approached, it turned out to be a nest of a White Stork containing three fully feathered young; one of the parents was also standing on the nest. This shows that it is always worth walking up to a nest, especially when you are in the Bredasdorp area.

According to the farmer who lives there the storks may have bred there in previous years already. Let us hope that they will establish a southern

breeding population. In Central Europe the numbers of breeding storks are on the decline. The 1958 census showed that there were only about half as many as there had been in 1934; Sweden and Switzerland had lost their last breeding pairs, and Denmark and the Netherlands had only about one fifth of their former numbers. Apart from the draining of swamps where the storks used to find their food, the increasing noise and the pollution of the air are thought to be the reasons for this decrease in the number of storks.

Miss Claire Robinson and Mrs. Martin have another record of a rare bird from this promising area. Just before entering Bredasdorp coming from Caledon they saw a European Roller on 6th December, 1961.

I was thrilled by something much less spectacular: On 14th January, 1962 I saw a European House Martin at Plumstead. It was a young bird showing brown on the back; it was sitting on a wire and the white-feathered feet (a characteristic not mentioned in Roberts) were most conspicuous. This is my first record of a House Martin in the Plumstead-Philippi area during 13 years of bird-watching. I phoned Mr. Brown and he told me that he had caught a House Martin at Athlone in December. A few days later I received a letter from Mr. Ferguson stating that he and Mr. Pottinger also saw a House Martin on 14th January at Tamatie-Vlei. I wonder whether all these three records concern the same bird. It seems strange that the House Martin which was recorded breeding in Cape Town in 1892, and which has often been seen in the Somerset West area, should be so rare here. Or is it perhaps only being overlooked?

A reply to Mr. Hofmeyr's question (cf. News Letter 64): Do eagles commonly loop the loop? has come from Mr. Peter Steyn now at Falcon College, Essexvale, Southern Rhodesia. He writes: Yes, I have seen it at an eyrie in the Peninsula in 1954 where I observed the full breeding cycle. The parent displayed near the nest not only looping the loop, but also performing a victory roll which would put a

spitfire pilot/.....

spitfire pilot to shame. There is no doubt in my mind that the birds perform this not only for courtship purposes, but also for the sheer exhilaration of the manoeuvre. I have on several occasions seen Black Eagles dive vertically for a thousand feet or more to shoot up for half that height again when they had nearly hit the ground. Anyone who understands the Black Eagle's hunting methods will realize that this is not an attempt to catch prey and is certainly performed for the sheer joy of flying. Leslie Brown in his book "Eagles" supports this view. He also attacks Lorenz's theory that eagles are perfectly content in captivity as they only need to fly to eat (says Lorenz). A captive bird has not the condition of a wild bird which acquires its fitness, just as we humans do, from exercise. Bird behaviourists of the die-hard school say you cannot credit birds with human emotions; if that is the case just how are they going to describe the obvious enjoyment which the Black Eagles (and other eagles) receive from such flights?

Some more about birds of prey. Mr. Martin writes: Just after sundown on 1st February at Klawervlei, Faure, Dr. Broekhuysen and I saw a Peregrine Falcon dive on some birds near the water's edge and take a small brown bird from the top of a bush whilst in full flight, zooming up to about 200 feet with the bird in its talons. It continued to fly at this height in wide circles and while flapping it held its legs back with the prey under the tail. Every now and again it would glide, then the prey would be brought forward and plucked, feathers flying as each mouthful was pulled out. This continued for several minutes, then the Peregrine settled on the ground some distance from the vlei to devour its prey.

There is another record of a "pair" of Mossies consisting of a male and two females (cf. News Letter 64). A junior member from Stellenbosch, Peter Lor, reports that all three together built the nest and successfully reared five young, all three adults taking part in the feeding. On 18th December the three birds were rearing a second brood in a likewise manner.

Dr. Winterbottom writes: Several members have recently discovered what good birding is to be had in the Cape Infanta area. Mr. Schmidt recently recorded Bar-tailed Godwits there. My wife and I spent the weekend of 14th to 15th January there. We were guided to the prawn-beds by Chris Munro. There were, he told us, far fewer waders there than when Mr. Schmidt visited the place. We did see one godwit, however, and, even more exciting, at least two Great Sandpipers, very like the more numerous White-fronted Sandpipers but larger, with a heavy black beak and a dark line between eye and bill. There appear to be no previous records of this species between Cape Town and the Eastern Cape.

Mr. Ferguson watched a Cape Thrush sitting on its nest in March 1961, the nest was in an oak tree only a few paces from his stoep. Before the nesting ended, the oak was shedding leaves so that the nest was clearly visible. There was an interesting sequel. On 27th August at 9 a.m. he saw a Cape Thrush standing on the remains of this nest. It tore at the structure filling its beak to capacity with material. It then flew to the garden of Glendower Hotel where suitable nesting sites for this species abound. Although it visited the lawn in Mr. Ferguson's garden, it was not seen on the old nest again.

Mr. Ferguson also reports the frequent flying of birds against the window of his study, one bird even killing itself. The opposite side of the room has a large port-hole type of window so that the birds think they can fly straight through.

The frequent use/.....

The frequent use of glass instead of brick walls in modern buildings seems to be a great danger for birds. In Germany so many birds have killed themselves by flying against such glass walls that the nature conservation authorities have started supplying cardboard silhouettes of a diving bird of prey to be pasted on the glass. This effectively prevents such accidents.

Dr. Broekhuysen informed me about some interesting recoveries of ringed birds:

A Greater Flamingo ringed as a young bird at Bredasdorp on 18 January 1961 was recovered at Brandvlei, Bushmanland on 26 December 1961. It is also certain that two of the ringed young of this species were seen on Smelly Creek at Port Elizabeth by Mr. Liveridge.

A European Swallow ringed by Mr. Brown at the Strandfontein Sewage Farm on 19 January 1961 was caught again at the same place on 24 December 1961. Another one ringed by the same ringer at the Athlone Sewage Farm on 7 April 1960 was caught again at the same place on 13 January 1962. Both these swallows, therefore, after having returned from their breeding territory in Europe, came back to the same wintering territory.

Mr. Middlemiss has shown that this is also the case with palearctic waders like Little Stints and some others.

Members are reminded that Mr. John Perry will again give an original painting to be presented as a prize to the most active contributor to any of the schemes organized by the Cape Bird Club. The six schemes mentioned in News Letter No. 58 are: Bird Ringing, Observation of migratory species, Nesting Records, Distribution of species in different habitats, Investigation of Red Bishop Bird colonies, Bird Road Casualties.

At the end of the Club year a panel will decide to whom the prize should be awarded.