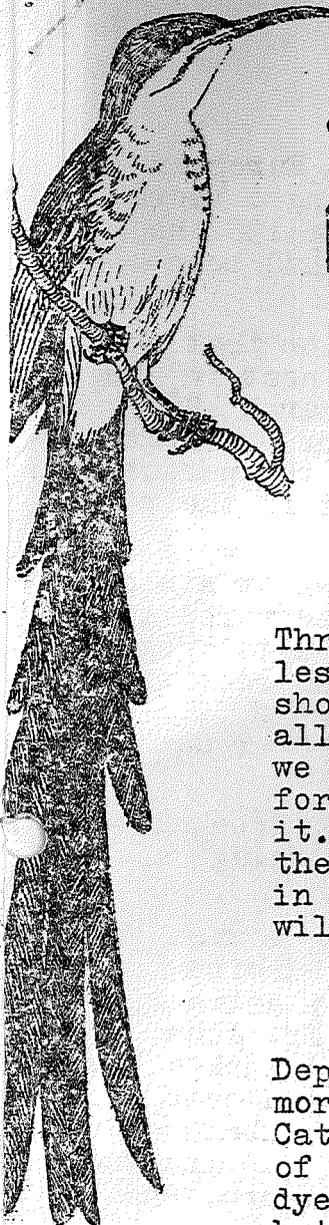


NEWSLETTER - NUUSBRIEF

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March 1963 Maart



In May 1962 the Cape Bird Club had 245 members. Through the years this number has remained more or less the same. The Committee feels that everyone should help to increase our membership. As we all know what a fascinating hobby bird-watching is, we should really not be so selfish as to keep it for ourselves only, but should introduce others to it. Once bitten by the bug, they are sure to join the Ornithological Society. So let us try to rope in as many new members as possible. The secretary will gladly supply the necessary forms.

Look out for Painted Tick Birds.

Cattle Egret (Tick Bird) Enquiry. The Cape Department of Nature Conservation, in order to learn more about the movements of Egrets, chiefly the Cattle Egret Bubulcus ibis, has marked a number of the birds with coloured dye. Thus far a purple dye has been successfully used to stain the birds, but other colours are to be put into use as well. Anyone observing Egrets with colour stains is asked to telephone or write to the Senior Officer, Division of Fauna and Flora, Private Bag 14, Stellenbosch. Tel. 3016.

The following information is requested:

Name and Address of observer

Stain colour of egret

Date, time of day and location coloured egret observed (for location please be as accurate as possible, e.g. name of farm or road mileages)

Weather conditions at time of observation.

Sandwich Terns wintering along our coasts.

Dr. Broekhuysen writes: We all know that a rather large number of Sandwich Terns remain in Southern Africa during our winter and apparently fail to migrate to the north to breed.

In 1959 Horst Müller from Germany analysed ringing recoveries of these terns which had been ringed on the continent of Europe and he found that the Sandwich Tern breeds for the first time only in its fourth year.

He also found that only in their third year birds migrate north from their "wintering quarters" south of the equator. The first and second year birds apparently remain in their wintering quarters. This seems to explain why we so often see Sandwich Terns during our winter months.

Interesting Ringing Recoveries.

On 1 December 1962 Mr. Jan Hofmeyr recovered a European Bee-eater in the Yzerfontein area which had been ringed there on 28 December 1958, four years ago. On 22 December 1962 he recovered another bee-eater in the same area which had been ringed by him on 13 December 1959, three years ago.

Members of the C.B.C. will be interested to know that one of the young White Storks which were ringed in the nest in the Bredasdorp district in December 1961 (cf. Ostrich March 1962), was killed by a native near the northern boundary of Northern Rhodesia in March 1962. This means that, although the parents had lost their migratory urge, the urge was present in their young.

Four European Swallows ringed by Mr. A.R. Brown at Athlone as well as one ringed at Strandfontein have been recovered in Russia, one at Birsik, one at Kurgan and one in the Altai region. A Curlew Sandpiper ringed by him at Tamatie Vlei was recovered in the Crimea. On 12 February 1963 Mr. Brown caught a European Swallow at Athlone, which had been ringed near Cambridge on 26 July 1962.

A European Swallow ringed at Bredasdorp by Dr. Broekhuysen and a group of C.B.C. members was recovered in the Kaluga region, Russia.

I should like to report a "recovery" involving a much shorter distance. A young Lesser Double-collared Sunbird which I ringed with an aluminium as well as a red plastic ring at Strandfontein on 20 September 1962 was seen by Mr. John Perry at Pinelands on 19 February 1963. He said it looked then like a male in full adult plumage. This seems to indicate that at least some of the sunbirds visiting our suburban gardens in summer are those breeding at Strandfontein. If the limited area of indigenous vegetation in which they breed there, should be destroyed, we might lose these colourful visitors.

Maccoa Duck nesting at Klaver Vlei.

On 11th January at 11 a.m. Mr. Lestranger found a nest with a large pale blue egg at Klaver Vlei. He thought it to be an abandoned nest, but by 2 p.m. it contained another freshly laid egg. On 19 January the female Maccoa Duck was breeding on a clutch of four. Although she is very shy, he managed to photograph the female on the nest. He reports: I got my picture by erecting my hide 26 ft from the nest and tying back the reeds early in the morning and occupying the hide only in the mid-afternoon after being "walked out" by Nico Myburgh.

The approach of the female to the nest is by short dives and entry to the reeds is via the backdoor. I knew she was about to come on the nest and although my eyes were fixed on the nest, I never saw her quite motionless near the nest until she blinked an eye. She oils her way on to the nest and never exposes more than a quarter of her body as she climbs up and over the edge of the nest. The male never came near the nest and kept cruising about 250 yds. distant.

Nestling Birds Wanted.

Nestlings of as many species of Southern African Passeriform birds as possible are needed (numbers 454 to 875 in Roberts Birds of South Africa, revised by McLachlan and Livesidge) in order to facilitate research into their natal plumage, composed of scantily distributed wisps of "down".

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Newly-hatched casualties from blown-down nests etc. would be most welcome, irrespective of whether they are naked or not, as well as older nestlings up to the age where rupturing of the sheaths of the pinfeathers takes place. Acknowledgements to all donors of material will be made when the results are published.

Specimens, preserved in alcohol or in 4% to 10% formaldehyde solution, should be sent to :-

M.B. Markus, Department of Zoology,
University of Pretoria, Pretoria.

Request for Slides

From time to time, the staff of the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, in co-operation with the Cape Divisional Council, accompanies parties of school children to Rondevlei Bird Sanctuary. These excursions are usually preceded by an illustrated talk; and in this connection the Director appeals to Cape Bird Club photographers for help either (i) by giving surplus slides to the Institute, or (ii) by lending slides of which the Institute can have copies made. Thanks to the generosity of our photographers last year, the Institute already has a number of good slides, but pictures of the following species are badly needed:

Dabchick	Moorhen
Reed Cormorant	Avocet
Grey Heron	Ringed Plover
Yellow-billed Egret	Kittlitz's Sandplover
Night Heron	Little Stint
Lesser Flamingo	Ruff
African Shelduck	Black-backed Gull
Egyptain Goose	White-winged Black Tern
Yellow-billed Duck	Pied Kingfisher
Cape Wigeon	Cape Wagtail

Less urgent, but still welcome, would be pictures of:

Greenshank	Curlew Sandpiper
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An Eldorado for Bird-Watchers

Mr. Peter Steyn spent a few days at a farm at Nieuwoudtville, N.W. Cape, at the beginning of January. He writes:

It was amazing to reach the top of Van Rhyn's Pass after the arid flats below and see the lush protea growth, where the Cape Sugarbird is said to occur.

The area is a paradise for larks and I saw the Thick-billed Grey-back Finch Lark, Red-capped, Long-billed and the Spike-heeled; other lark species occur too, but I did not see them. The Lark-like Bunting was extremely plentiful, occurring in considerable flocks. A Black Harrier was there, I had hardly expected to see it in such an arid area. An interesting find was the European House Sparrow. I saw several males, one of which was carrying food to young under an eave. After some hard work I managed to locate two half-grown young of a Burchell's Courser.

White-backed Duck at Rietvlei

On 22 December Mr. Pottinger saw a White-backed Duck at the west end of Rietvlei. It was shepherding 6 young which he estimated to be about four weeks old. On 27 January Mr. Pottinger and Mr. Fergusson came across another of these Ducks in the Diep River where it flows into Rietvlei. It was among a group of Teal, but when they flew away, it remained and dived periodically. It was lying deep in the water, showing only its

head and a little of the back.

On 26 January these two birdwatchers saw a pair of Paradise Flycatchers between Zeekoevlei and Rondevlei.

Mrs. V. Unger saw a Paradise Flycatcher in her garden at Hout Bay on 26 January.

Strange "Birds" found in nests.

Mrs. Unger had an Orange-breasted Sunbird's nest in her garden at Hout Bay last August. The half-grown young disappeared from it without trace. When she later examined the undamaged nest for a possible second clutch, she felt something soft and alive in it. She gently wormed the thing upwards and out came the biggest Monkey Spider she had ever seen!

In August last year I watched Prinias building at Strandfontein. When I put my finger into the nest some days later, I felt an enormous egg, but what I lifted out, was just a big Garden Snail. This creature had prevented the Prinias from using their nest.

Diedrikkie Koekoek bring kos vir sy vrou.

Dr. J.E. Nel beskryf n baie interessante waarneming, wat ons lede seker graag wil hoor, al is dit n bietjie ver ten noorde van ons klub gebied gemaak. Hy het sy Desember vakansie op Hanover K.P. deurgebring. Hy het twee pare Diedrikkies dopgehou en skryf: Ek het gesien hoe die mannetjie die veld invlie en terugkom met n haarwurm in sy bek, dan n paar diep pronkbuigings voor die wyfie maak, terwyl laasgenoemde die wurm sonder veel sigbare dankbaarheid uit sy bek gryp.

Onder n brug oor die Seekoei-rivier op pad na Noupoot is oor die honderd neste van die Familie-swawels gesien. n Kuifkopvisvanger het uit sy nes in die rivierwal gevlie en dit is gevind 3 voet diep in die wal met 5 bebroeide eiers daarin.

Dr. Nel het altesame 72 verskillende soorte voëls in die omgewing van Hanover gesien.

Bar-tailed Godwit at Tamatievlei.

On 22 December Mr. A. Morris saw a Bar-tailed Godwit among a fairly large and mixed group of waders at Tamatievlei. The bird was conspicuous by its larger size and the long bill which was black with a pinkish base.

Records of Late Breeding.

At the end of December Master Chris Munro watched a Cape Bunting building at Cape Infanta. Two eggs were laid on 29 and 30 December. On 15 January there were two young which may have hatched on 14 January already, as he was not able to check the nest on that day.

On 26 December I flushed a Cape Bunting from the nest containing two eggs at Strandfontein. The eggs were still there on 3 and 8 January, but the bird probably deserted, as in March the nest contained the broken shells.

On 19-20 February, Dr. Winterbottom and his wife made a trip to the Robertson area to Klipdrif, the farm of S.A.O.S. members Mr. and Mrs. Marais. He writes: Here we were

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hurried into a jeep and driven to the farm Highland Home, next to the Vrolijkheid Predator Control Station of the Department of Nature Conservation. Highland Home belongs to Mr. and Mrs. J.J. Malherbe, who welcomed us with true Afrikaner hospitality. There are two dams there and on the lower was a Black Stork. On the upper there still remained the last broods of what had been a big heronry of Cattle, Little and Yellow-billed Egrets, Grey, Black-headed and Night Herons, Sacred Ibises and Reed and White-breasted Cormorants. The nests were in thorn trees, now on dry land. We had hoped to do some ringing, but the young birds retired to the tops of the trees and we succeeded in ringing only three Cattle Egrets.

In the same clump of trees, on slightly higher ground than the heronry, we were shown nests, now abandoned, of Wattled Starlings, which have bred there for at least three successive years. We plan to re-visit the farm about October to see the whole nesting operation in full swing.