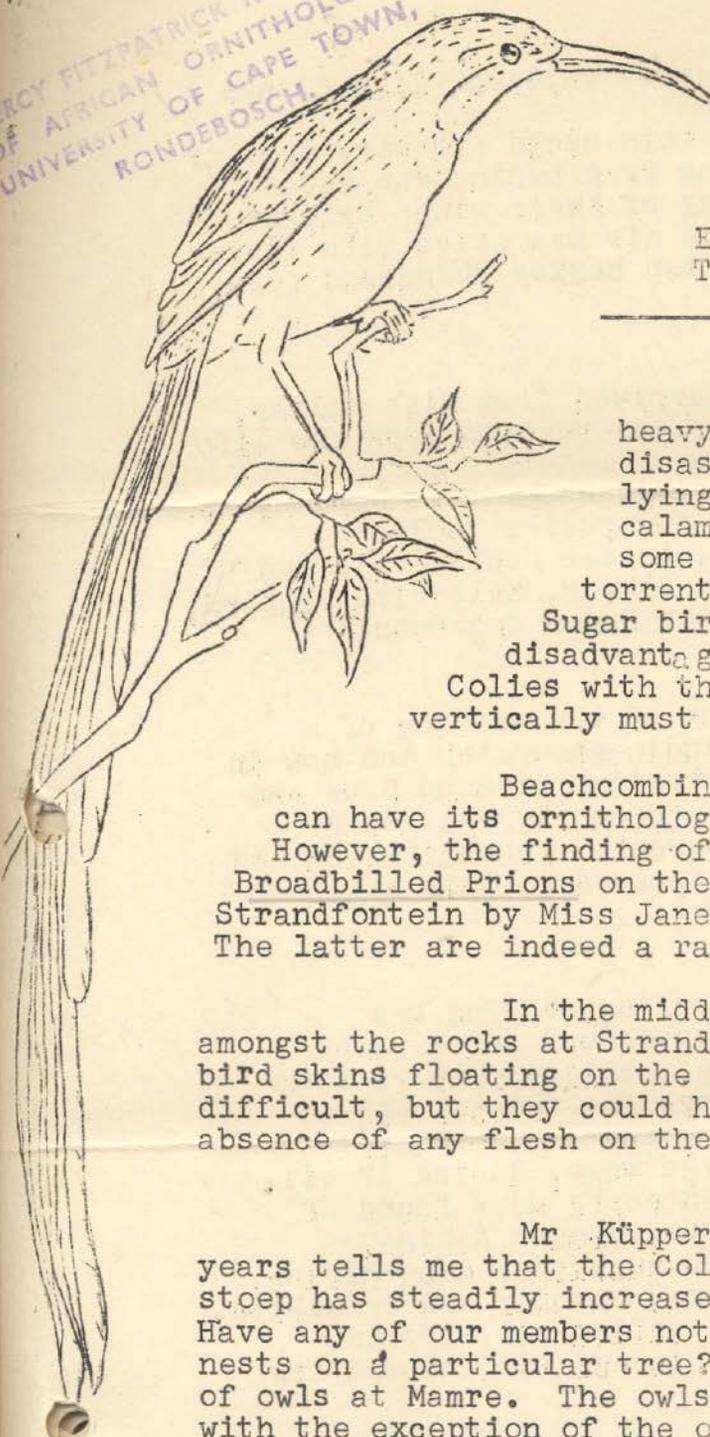


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It was remarkable that the recent heavy rains and subsequent flooding so disastrous to many people in the low lying areas, produced few reports of calamities in the bird world. Just how some of our smaller species survive the torrential downpours, I often wonder. The Sugar bird must find its long tail quite a disadvantage, but it occurs to me that our Colies with their habit of resting almost vertically must offer minimum resistance to rain.

Beachcombing, that most pleasant of pastimes can have its ornithological rewards as many of us know. However, the finding of two Sea Pigeons and twenty Broadbilled Prions on the beach between Muizenberg and Strandfontein by Miss Jane Ethelston was a sad surprise. The latter are indeed a rarity.

In the middle of August whilst wandering amongst the rocks at Strandfontein I noticed several white bird skins floating on the waves. Identification was difficult, but they could have been gannet, the complete absence of any flesh on the skins was remarkable.

Mr Küpper who has lived at Mamre for many years tells me that the Colony of Weaver birds against his stoep has steadily increased in numbers in recent years. Have any of our members noticed a fluctuation of Weaver birds nests on a particular tree? He also spoke of the large number of owls at Mamre. The owls seem rather neglected in the club, with the exception of the one which conveniently favours a ledge at the University on which to nest. Should any of our young members feel like a night out, some interesting work could be done at Mamre.

A note from Mr T. Stafford Smith is so attractive that it demands quoting in full:-

I was feeling very pleased with myself, I had circled around through the bushes, all that was necessary now was to wade straight forward towards the old block house that stands in the shallow waters of Riet vlei. The bird that I had been hoping to film for two years was feeding on the other side and I was completely out of his sight. My camera, heavy with telephoto, pulled at my arm, everything was silent except for the murmur of the waves beyond the dunes and the ripple of my waders as they stirred long trails of mud across the blu water.

Then the Stilts came shrieking their Fury around my head, but as they had already been diving and screaming at the crows their clamour did not disturb the other birds.

The block house was nearer now, another hundred feet and I would be inside, the slits where guns once peered would make an ideal vantage point, already I could picture the film I hoped to get, the reed fringed vlei, the tiny island on which the Fish Eagle was devouring his prey,

and in the distance

while all around impatient crows were waiting, like hyenas around a lion.

I failed to see the two thin necks and wary eyes of the Egyptian geese that watched me from behind the reeds, their alarm call and the thrashing of their wings brought panic on the vlei, in a moment the air was alive with flying birds, nothing was left but the Fish Eagles abandoned prey, the torn body of a mole.

An interesting letter has arrived from Miss Moller, indicating much patience and close observation upon the life and nesting of the Cape Sparrows.

Mr Johannesson writes of a visit he made to Berg River in June, there he saw more than 50 species including Purple Heron, Spoonbill, Flamingo, Lesser Double collared Sunbird, Crowned Plover, Blacksmith Plover, Malachite Sunbird, Pied Kingfisher, Sweet Waxbill, Night Heron and Purple gallinule.

From Hugenot comes an account of the rearing of a Laughing Dove nestling by Mrs V. Widdicombe-Smith and how in her aviary it later killed an Australian Diamond Dove and pecked the head clean of feathers. Normally the young Laughing Dove feed of course by parental regurgitation and for one to be reared by hand as happened in this case is indeed a feat.

The clubs outing to Mamre on August 22nd was quite a success, in spite of a heavy shower and a washed away bridge involving a long detour. Whilst members took refuge from the shower and felt sorry for themselves, we noticed the birds as active as ever, and a Bokmakierie came down to feed its young, a large worm, during it all. At this outing a record number of 28 nests were found of Yellow and White throated Seedeaters, Ground Robins, Malachite and Lesser Double Collared Sunbirds, Cape Robins, and a nest of Greybacked (or Wailing) Warbler and Grassbird. Never the less the little Stonechat defied all efforts to find its nest and many pairs of binoculars followed its every movement for quite a while.

The recent outing to Pottberg was made successful entirely due to Dr Broekhuysen and Mr Nielsen who gave lifts to all;. We were well rewarded by seeing the Vultures and their young, but no nests were actually accessible. We also found the large young of a Black Eagle on its eyrie. The nests we found, including the beginnings of a Tchagra Shrikes nest, were all at a very much later stage of development than the Cape birds. This shows the first indication of the fact that the further east and north one goes from CapeTown, the later the breeding seasons are.

The number of Nest Record cards to hand are just over 200, we expect during October that this number will be greatly increased.

The first Piet-my-vrou was recorded at Newlands on the 27th of September by R.Liversidge; subsequently it was heard elsewhere. This is 10 days later than last year.

It is most interesting to learn from Dr Broekhuysen that he saw a Piet-my-vrou at Kirstenbosch some two weeks before any were heard.

Another interesting note comes from Miss Moller; she has moved to Onrust. She writes that now she has

fixed up a bird bath under some nearby trees she has visitors all day long. The nearby veld also teems with bird life. Miss Moller extends a warm invitation to Cape Bird Club members to pay a visit to her cottage if they are in the district. The address is Vermont, Onrust.

Dr Broekhuysen sends in a note to say that a familiar chat has visited his garden at Newlands. It spent its time sitting on the top of his peach tree, and he wonders if the bird is spreading into the suburbs. If other members should see a Familiar Chat in suburban surroundings would they let him know please.

Have members seen the handbook recently published by the Director of Nature Conservation entitled Some Protected birds of the Cape Province. It contains some fine plates and as its cost is only 5/-, is the ideal small gift to the youngsters or adults whose interest in birds is just beginning. I understand that another book is to follow.

Mr D.H.Eccles of the University sends the following:- I wish to report two records which I think may be of interest. On Wednesday 25 August 1954, while I was watching the Lipton Cup yacht race from the end of the breakwater at the docks I happened to notice a single Cape Hen Procellaria aequinoctialis between the end of the breakwater and the bell buoy. This disappeared but at 12.20 I saw a pair of these petrels so close to the breakwater that they could easily be identified with the naked eye. Between these sightings I saw a Black browed Albatross, Diomedea melanophrys, between the bell buoy and the Duncan Dock. I have made a number of trips to the sea on the local trawlers, and know these birds well so the identifications are reliable. It may be of some interest to note that there was a southeasterly of about 25-30 m.p.h. blowing, with scattered clouds, and light showers.

As members have heard Mrs Rowan has resigned from editorship of the news sheet after very ably and entertainingly filling its pages for a long time.

Miss J. Robinson has agreed to take over the position but is at present holidaying at Zanzibar.

Mr Clarke of Kenilworth has collected these notes together,

CHRISTMAS CARDS.

The following information has been received from the Wild Life Protection Society of S.A.

You may be interested to know that one of our Christmas cards this years is to have as its cover a very handsome 4-colour illustration of a Scarlet throated Sunbird, which I feel would have a particular appeal for your members. Details of our cards are as follows.

- 4-colour design of Scarletthroated Sunbird by C.T.Asterley Maberly, size 4½" wide x 6" deep including envelopes 1/- each.
- Black and white design of Leopard and cubs by same artist. 4½" x 5½" with envelope 6d each.
- Black and white design of Gerenuk (Waller's Gazelle) by Ugo Mochi 4½" x 6" with envelope 9d each.

We also have for sale three handsome calanders, photographic, studies of Kudu, Nyala and Waterbuck with Elephant in two sizes at 2/- and 3/- each.

Samples will be shown at the evening meeting of the 15th Oct.