

The Cape Bird Club
News Letter No. 40
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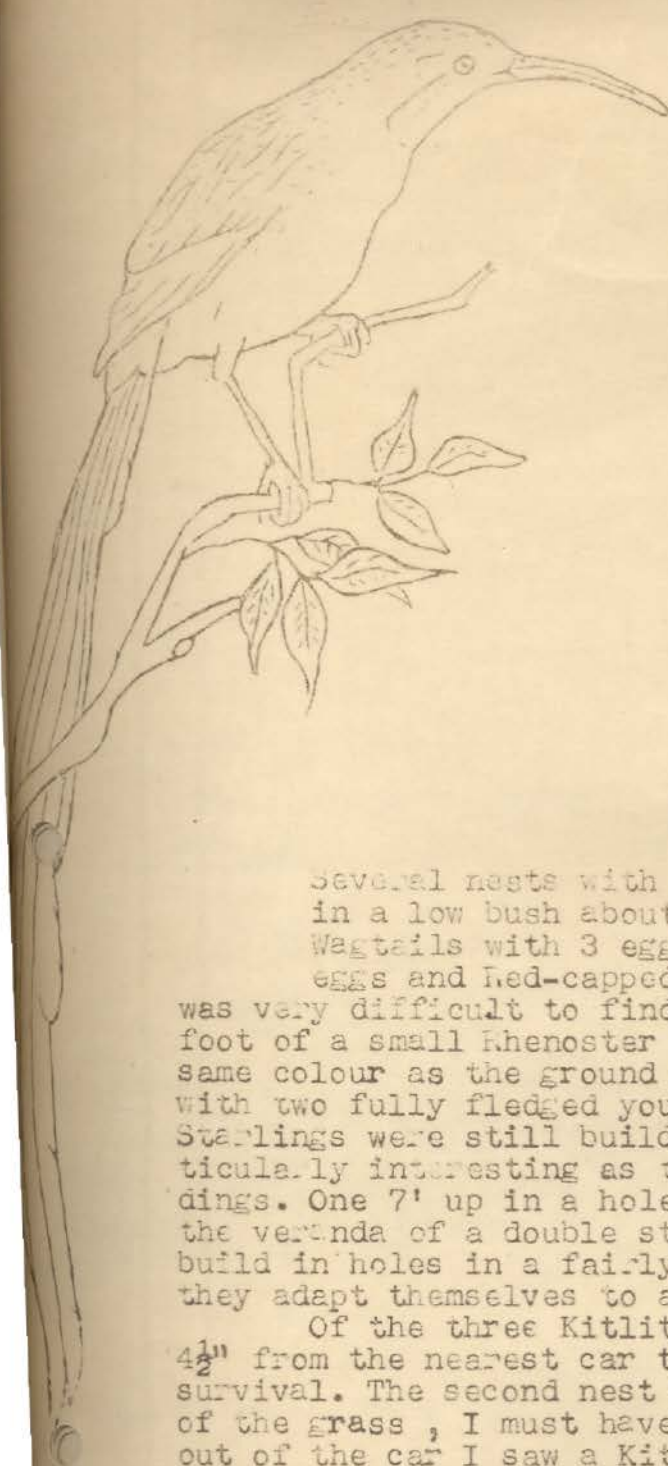
[Our last visit to L'Agulhas 3
October to 8 October was interesting.
Four species new to us at L'Agulhas,
were Hartlaubs Gulls, Banded Sand
Martin, Red Bishop Birds and on the
Salt Pan we counted about 500 Black-
necked Grebe. Migrants were not in
great numbers as yet; five White
Storks, all looking rather bedrag-
gled, Ruff, Greenshank, a Solitary
European Swallow, Little Saint and
Curlew Sandpiper were seen in very
small flocks, and three tired look-
ing Common Sandpipers alighted toward
evening on the 7th on the grassy
verge just above the sea.

Several nests with eggs or young were found; Cape Apalis
in a low bush about 4" from the ground with three eggs,
Wagtails with 3 eggs, three Kitlitz each containing two
eggs and Red-capped Lark with two very young. This nest
was very difficult to find, it was right on the ground at the
foot of a small Rhenoster bush and the young were exactly the
same colour as the ground around: Malachite's nest in a wattle,
with two fully fledged young Waxbills, Sparrows and Pied
Starlings were still building. The Pied Starlings were par-
ticularly interesting as the nests were being built in build-
ings. One 7' up in a hole in an old garage, the other under
the veranda of a double storied house. These birds usually
build in holes in a fairly high bank, the above shows how
they adapt themselves to areas where there are no banks.

Of the three Kitlit's nests one was right on the road
4 1/2" from the nearest car track with little possible chance of
survival. The second nest was well off the road on the edge
of the grass, I must have stepped nearly on it, for as I got
out of the car I saw a Kitlitz giving a wonderful display of
injury feigning almost under my feet gradually moving further
away from where I was standing, as I followed her she flew
off. Returning to the car we moved off a short distance and
waited for her to return which she soon did, just as she settled
down we got out of the car, she rose hastily scrapped with
her feet and flew off going to the spot we found the eggs co-
vered with tiny pebbles. The third nest inside a fence was
covered with tiny sticks.]

Mr. Ashforth accompanied by his son went for a holiday
to Namaqualand from 15-20 September, hoping it would coincide
with the advent of the flowers and of course also accompanied
by a 'Bird Book' Passing through the district of Malmesbury
they saw Sand Martins, many Pied Crows and Pied Starlings. In
Hopefield were Blacksmith Plover, Yellow and Red Bishop Birds
Ravens, Pied Crow, Pied Starlings, Black Korhaan in wattle
Crane, Coot, Cattle Egret and a Lemon Dove. Continuing to
Saldanha they found a Yellow-Canary's nest with five eggs. The
nest was in a low bush 15" from the ground and within 3' of
the main road; the cliff edge overlooking the sea being 10yds
away.

Moving on to Piquethers District



Moving on to Piquetberg District they saw many Red-bishop birds, Cape Bulbul and on a temporary vlei, counted 10 Avocet. On the road to Citrusdal there were literally hundreds of Red-bishop birds. Near van Rhyn'sdorp, along the al-

almost dried up river bed of the Widoos, a tributary of the Oligante they stopped for a meal. Here the birds were more active among the trees, mainly thorn with 3/5" spikes. In the fork of one was a Scouper's nest with three fully fledged young. Both parents were busy feeding their offspring and did not object to their presence provided they did not venture nearer than six feet.

Here also were found Black-headed Orioles, Dusky Sunbird, Cape Weaver and Bully Seed-eaters. On the way to Springbok they left the car by the side of the road and climbing the hills were fortunate to find a pair of Namaqua Wren Warblers.

As Mr. Ashforth says, "There is no mistaking this excited little bird with the 'clikerty-clack, clikerty-clack' of its wings coupled with its utter lack of timidity." While feeding their young they revealed their little pear shaped woven nest with small hole on top. Inside were four fully fledged youngsters. Later a second pair was found with two young.

Climbing the hill on the opposite side of the road they surprised a number of Ground Wood Pecker which appeared to have been breaking open an ant-hill and feeding on its contents.

Other birds in this area were Boks., Fork-tailed Drongo and Malachite Sun-birds. Next day they saw Marico Sunbird, Mountain Chat, Black Flycatcher, Cape Sparrows, Sand Martins and a female African Shelduck.

The same evening being many miles from habitation they settled down for the night, and next morning while washing by the side of the Swart Doorn River between Garies and Bitterfontein a pair of African Shelduck settle by the pool where they had been washing. Two, lovely colourful specimens, Male and Female, the first pair they had seen together.

Wandering up the dried river bed, except for pools here and there and there they saw that, "grave bird with the dignity of a magistrate at court, whose facial expression is that of a judge's wig, The Namaqua Dove". Almost on the river they found the nest of a Malachite Sunbird with two young, Fiscal Flycatcher, Bokmakierie, and Treble-banded Plover.

On the van Rynsdorp-Calvinia road 18 Compou or Kori Busters were seen.

It is interesting to note that the furthestest point North of Cape Town where they saw the Cape Turtle Dove was between Clanwilliam and Citrusdal, where also they saw Wattle Crane, Boks, Black-headed Oriel, Fiscal Flycatcher, Lesser-double-collared and Malachite Sunbirds.

As Mr. Ashforth says, "This year the birds were more in prominence than the flowers, so a good bird watching holiday was enjoyed.

An interesting note on the nesting of Alpine Swifts

An interesting note on the nesting of Alpine Swifts comes from Mr. Brown, he says, "On 1 November my brother informed me that he saw a large swift carrying feathers into a crag in a cliff near Blinkwater Ravine. Could I please tell him what kind of Swift it was?. So, on the 10th we both went along to this spot and after fifteen minutes wait saw five Black Swift enter various crevices. We then investigated the crag referred to, which was horizontal, and some 40ft up, clearly visible, and attached to either side of the crag was a nest constructed of feathers. Immediately below on the ground we found recently broken white egg-shells. After half an hour an Alpine Swift was sighted entering a vertical crag but no nest was visible.

Alpine Swifts were seen several times entering these two points during the hour and a half that the cliff was under observation. The bird seen carrying feathers on the 1st was an Alpine Swift".

The following miscellaneous note by Dr. Winterbottom may be of interest to readers of the News Letter. He says, "From 20-25th October I was collecting at a farm

a farm called Lokenburg, about 25 miles south of Newwoodville, just where the Karoo breaks down into the fynbos of the escarpment. There is a lot of water on this farm, and at one point a considerable grove of poplars. This grove was the haunt of at least one pair of Cape Batis! How they got there I cannot think. They share the environment with Lamague Thrushes, Cape Robins, Pied Barbets, a Greater Honeyguide and other birds. Another unexpected species which I saw at Lokenburg was the European Starling. I saw up to seven together. In addition, there were the most usual Karoo birds, though the Rufous-eared Warbler and Pirrit (?) Batis seemed to be absent and the Fairy Flycatcher and Karoo Robin rare - the latter was common in the fynbos though.

Last week my son Richard found a Turtle Dove nest with three eggs in it. I don't know, off hand, of any previous records of this bird laying three eggs; in any case, it must be very rare. Unfortunately, the nest was later robbed so we had no chance of seeing how the parents would cope with three young.

On the 8th, while coming into town by car, I saw a Lanner chasing pigeons on the beach between the new power station and the docks at Salt River, and on the 9th I saw a Yellow-billed Kite near Ndabane. It was being bombed by Hartlaub's Gulls. Messies are again breeding in one of the miserable Port Jacksons on the foreshore. Last year, their two attempts came to grief. This year they have chosen a more remote tree and have already reared one young from their first brood and now have three second-brood young in the nest.

A Tribute to the Bird Club .

Once a year for many years , I have had to do a business trip through Namaqualand and the North Western Districts of the Cape and the only impression which remains of these old trips is terrible roads , stifling heat and dust together with a feeling of relief when the job was completed , at least for another year.

With John I joined the Bird Club at the beginning of this year to be taught to observe and appreciate the beauty and interest which is to be found even in the most desolate parts of the country , and what a difference it made to this years trip , from the 1st to the 5th October. It is true I suppose that the roads , heat and dust were as bad as ever but I must confess I had mixed feelings as we approached home actually sorry that the trip was over but bubbling to tell my wife and everybody about all the things we had seen and heard ;-

Sights such as twenty European Bee-eaters sitting on and then gliding in their own beautiful way from a wire fence which was just below us as we stood on a high bank at Lamberts Bay. With this flock there were about ten Yellow Bishop Birds and in the near background numerous Red Bishop Birds were busy building nests in a reed bed.

The big Kaffir Boom Tree in full blossom at Vredendal where we sheltered from the mid-day heat , proved to be absolutely crowded Malachite and Double-collared Sunbirds. The Valley between Springbok and Pofadder where nearly every tree of any size seemed to house the nest of a bird of prey, most of the nests were almost within reach of the ground but so secure against interference with a complete barrier of wicked thorns that Mrs. Chanting Goshawk and other much larger birds did not even bother to get off their nests as we stood below. I wonder why this mixture of hawks (for there were many varieties) select this particular spot for nesting , and where they get their water is a mystery.

The Black Crow which made such a determined at-

attack on John as he climbed a windmill just outside Pof-
adder to inspect its nest and rather large ugly chick. It
hit him on the head several times with its wings. The nes-
ting colonies of Black-headed Herons in the mountains be-
tween Loxton and Beaufort West and the amusing sight of
Mrs. Hevon bringing in her nesting material - a large
branch, longer than herself, and the difficulty she had
to land with such a load on her partly built nest.

In addition to x scenic beauty the Aughrabies Falls
produced a real feast of bird study and continuous argument
between John and myself as to bird identity. A case of the
blind leading the blind when one is so far away from the
guidance of experts and old hands.

The Lizard with the metallic blue head, yellow
front legs and pink back legs and wummy we saw at the falls
will not be forgotten. No there was nothing to drink but
water. Nor shall we forget the feeling of satisfaction
when the final agreement was reached that we were looking
at Pied Wagtail, Orange River Wagtail, Bearded Woodpecker,
Red-eyed Bulbul, Pale winged Starling, Karoo Kestrel,
Namaqua Grouse, but the rest were far too many which we
just had to call "Larks".

Finally, the birds which seemed to practise segre-
gation were of interest, the Pied Crow which suddenly gave
way to the Raven, which in turn gave way to Black Crow and
so on. Pied Starlings disappeared quite close to the grain
fields and their places were taken by the Red Wing and then
by the Glossy, and finally as we went further North the
Pale Winged took command of the territory. Do these birds
arm their frontiers ?.

Why the Social Weaver, with its great nest which
sometimes covers the whole crown of a big thorn tree, does
not come south of Kenhardt to a kinder country where they
would have far less work finding the vast Haystacks necessary
for their homes is also something I would like to know.

N.L. Russell.

Rhodesia has produced a Check List of the Birds of
Southern Rhodesia, This list will give full information
regarding every species of bird so far recorded in Southern
Rhodesia.

It is estimated that the cost will be 21/-.

This being the last News Letter of the year I
would like to take this opportunity to thank all those
Members who have sent in "News" Many new members have
joined the ranks of "News Senders" and this has made our
work easier in every way.

I wish you all a Happy Xmas and continued 'Good
Birding' in 1957.

The Secretary wishes to apologise for the delay
in production of these circulars. It is entirely her own
fault. She hopes that you have enjoyed the holidays and
that there will be plenty of discussion when we all meet
again.