

Newsletter No. 43.

May, 1957.

PERCY FITZPATRICK INSTITUTE
OF AFRICAN ORNITHOLOGY,
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN,
RONDEBOSCH.

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It has been suggested that the Bird Club should try to ring more birds. Apart from ringing Gannets, very little has been done, and good chances to obtain valuable information, especially concerning migratory birds, are lost. All members of the Cape Bird Club are invited to co-operate by reporting roosts or nesting sites where old or young birds might be ringed in great numbers.

Please contact either Mr. Clarke, phone 73813 (office hours only) or Mr. Schmidt, phone 74662, who have been appointed to act as organisers of ringing expeditions to go out to such places.

Mr. Martin saw five Cormorants flying low one evening over the water at Paardvlei, Somerset West, on their way to their roosting tree. As they flew each in turn dipped its bill into the water, the way Swallows do when drinking and each did this on several occasions.

Mr. Martin had never seen this in Cormorants before, and has so far not found anyone else who has seen this phenomenon in this species, - they were probably White-breasted.

Dr. Winterbottom interesting account of birds seen on trip to Swellendam, Barrydale I am quoting in full: He says:

"In April, I combined attendance as the Society's Observer at the annual meeting of the Cape Department of Nature Conservation's Advisory Committee at Swellendam with a collecting trip to Barrydale, River Sonder End and Touws River. Part of the function of the Advisory Committee was to make a reconnaissance of the Department's recently acquired game farm, DE Hoop, in the Bredasdorp District. The total number of species recorded from De Hoop was 104, but this included a few seen by Dr. Hey and Mr. Brand before the date of our visit. Dr. Hey has added three more since. The highlight was unquestionably a male Red-backed Shrike, a new species to our area. It was first spotted by Miss Courtenay-Latimer, in response to whose excited cries, I hurried up. We were joined by Mr. Middlemiss, Dr. Hewitt, and others and Mr. Hohelsen was despatched post haste to get his camera.

Other notable species were two Grey Plovers, at the coast, large numbers of White-winged Black Terns, many in full breeding plumage and a fork-tailed Drongo.

On route between Swellendam and De Hoop, interesting species included a good many Long-billed Larks (surprisingly tame), some elusive Clapper Larks and a Tchagra Shrike.

On Tuesday morning, while the Museum Directors were conferring with the Administration's officials, Mr. Middlemiss, Mr. Willis and I investigated the birds of the Marloth Flower Reserve. The forest above the reserve was dull, the only species of any interest being a Cinnamon Dove, but

the thick stuff below the forest was full of birds, Sugarbirds, Greater Double-collared Sunbirds, Orange-breasted Sunbirds, Vivtorin's Warblers, Apalis and Siskins among them.

After the meeting I went over Tradouw's Pass to Barrydale for the week-end. The pass is more interesting scenically than ornithologically and all the indigenous forest is on the wrong side. Barrydale itself is surrounded by cultivated lands, swarming with Mossies - and three species of Starling, and by some remarkably bird-less hills. However, a few miles to the east one finds oneself in the proper Karroo with spike-heeled and Rufous Karroo larks, Rufous-eared and Karroo Green Warblers, Chat Flycatchers, Pririt Batises, Hartlaub's Chats and Chanting Goshawks. As usual the Larks were very tame and the Chat Flycatchers extremely shy, as were the Karroo Green Warblers.

Monday was chiefly spent exploring the Montague District, in which a list of 45 birds was compiled, including such Karroo forms as the Pririt Batis, Fairy Flycatcher and Rufous Karroo Lark - oddly the only example seen of the latter was between the road and a row of cottages, which saved its life.

On Tuesday I endeavoured to reach the very considerable body of indigenous forest in the River Sonderend Mts. near Lindeshof, but only managed to get to an isolated gully. Most of the usual forest birds noted, including a juvenile Sweet Waxbill still being fed by its parents, but my hope that additional species, like the Crested Flycatcher, would turn up was unfulfilled. A trip in Spring, having made prior arrangements with the Forestry Department about opening a padlocked gate, would be more hopeful.

After this frustration and a night at Greyton, I retraced my steps to Montague and hence threaded my way through the Waggonboom Mts. to Touws River. Several Hartlaub's Chats were noted between Storms Vlei and Bonniedale, some very wild Spike-heeled Larks just south of the Montague-Worcester border, but not much else.

At Touws River itself there was a good deal of interest beginning with at least half-a-dozen European Starlings, followed by a Spoonbill (!) Blacksmith Plovers, more Spike-heeled Larks and a Karroo Green Warbler. Two nests were found, a Mossies with 3 eggs and a Common Waxbill with three young ready to fly - in fact two of them did fly while I was investigating. I saw a partial albino Hartlaub's Chat. The back was wholly white, and the head mostly white, making it most conspicuous when it flew and it had me completely non-plussed at first.

On April 28th Mrs. Taylor and Mrs. Alais saw a Grey-headed Gull bathing with some Hartlaub and Blackbacked Gulls in the river which flows across the beach at Hout Bay. This bird is only an occasional visitor here.

NEST RECORDS RETURNS 1957.

No. of Cards returned	:	379
No. of persons returning one or more cards - 45.		
1. J. Martin		105
2. J. Macloed		102
3. Dr. Winterbottom.		51
4. A.R. Brown.		43
5. F. Bell.		30
6. R.K. Schmidt		27
7. Dr. Broekhuysen.		24
8. Colin Owen.		18
9. N. Macloed.		14
10. Mrs. Knipe.		12

11. C. Murray	12
13. Mrs. I. Taylor	11
14. John Russell	10
15. Robert Martin	8
16. Mrs. Broekhuysen	7
16. Miss G. Robinson	7
17. N.L. Russell	6
18. A. Morris	5
19. Miss E.B. Robinson	5
20. Miss J. Robinson	4
21. Hugh Roger Smith	4
22. Major Diggle	3
23. A. Eaton	2
24. Miss J. Ethelston	2
25. Brig. Glegg	2
26. R. Hazell	2
27. Miss K. Macloed	2
28. Mrs. J. Martin	2
29. James Martin	2
30. Mrs. C. Murray	2
31. W. Stanford	2
32. P. Steyn	2
33. Mrs. Winterbottom	2
34. R. Attwell	1
35. Miss Parnet	1
36. E. Ashforth	1
37. J.H. Hofmeyer	1
38. Col. Hallack	1
39. E.R. Johannesson	1
40. N. Joubert	1
41. Mrs. Iacour	1
42. W. Johnson	1
43. Miss N. Tweedie	1
44. John Watts	1
45. Richard Winterbottom	1

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

On April 25th, 1957 the Annual General Meeting of the Cape Bird Club was held in the Zoology Department at the University of Cape Town. There were over seventy members and visitors present. After the Chairman's Report was read the following office bearers were elected for the ensuing year:-

- Chairman - Dr. Broekhuysen.
- Vice-Chair. - Miss J. Robinson.
- Hon. Secretary - Miss P. de Wet.
- Hon. Treasurer - Mrs. Broekhuysen.
- Committee members - The Misses J. Ethelston, and C. Robinson, Messrs. Macloed, Martin Clarke and Schmidt.

After the business of the evening was concluded Mr. Stanford showed his excellent colour transparencies which were much appreciated, these were followed by two excellent films taken by Mr. Haagner of the Birds of the C.F.S.

Chairman's Report for the period 9th June 1956 - 12th April 1957.

During the period under consideration the Committee has met seven times. All meetings were well attended by the Committee Members indicating that they have the affairs of the Club at heart.

A large number of topics were discussed at these meetings and only the more important ones can be mentioned briefly.

- (a) The Committee asked Miss Ethelsten to take over the organising of transport during outings, as Miss Logan left for Rhodesia, Miss Ethelsten kindly accepted. The sub-committee for organising field-outings consisting of Mr. Macloed and Mr. John Martin were reappointed. Misses. Troughton and Clarke were asked to continue organising teas at evening meetings, and they kindly agreed to carry on for another year. Mr. John Martin was asked to take charge of the nesting chard scheme and Dr. Broekhuysen to handle the distribution of rings to members of the Club. Mr. Schmidt was asked to act as recorder of scattered observations on behaviour and to be in charge of the filing system.
- (b) The question of the increase of the S.A.O.S. subscription from £1. 5. 0. to £1. 10. 0. was discussed and the Committee expressed itself unanimously in favour of an increase.
- (c) The possibility of raising funds for the Pan-African Congress by organising film evenings was explored, but eventually abandoned as not practical.
- (d) It was agreed to organise the reading of important items in News Sheets of other Clubs at evening meetings. The editorial part of the work to be carried out by the Hon. Secretary, Miss. de Wet with the aid of suggestions by the other members of the Committee.
- (e) Acting on a suggestion from Mrs. Hoor-Tyrell, the Committee approached the Divisional Council of the Cape with the request to re-name the Ronde Vlei Bird Sanctuary as the Leonard Gill Bird Sanctuary. The Divisional acting on the recommendation of its Ronde Vlei Bird Sanctuary Advisory Board informed the Cape Bird Club that the name of the Sanctuary could not be changed but that the museum in the grounds of the Sanctuary would be named "Leonard Gill Museum"
- (f) The Club was represented by its Chairman on the Committee formed by the initiative of the Wild Life Protection Society which explored the possibilities of the establishment of the proposed Strandfontein-Swartklip reserve.
- (g) The Committee unanimously decided to make Mr. Liversidge an Honorary Country Member of the Club.
- (h) A rather unfortunate incident, where a guest of one of the members of the Club was seen to collect eggs during a field-outing was discussed at length by the Committee. It was eventually decided to warn members that such conduct could not be tolerated and was highly unfair to the field-outing organising sub-committee
- (i) The establishment of a salt winning plant at the Langerbaan Lagoon was investigated by the Committee. When it was found that such an establishment may become true in the near future, it was decided to approach and inform the Director of Nature Conservation in the Cape Province and to ask him to take the necessary steps to curtail these plans.
- (j) The Committee decided to continue with the Club's yearly habit of giving a donation to the S.A.O.S.

EVENING MEETINGS.

During the past year five evening meetings were held. These meetings were very well attended and on several occasions the number of people present exceeded eighty.

At the first meeting Mr. John Grindley talked on flamingoes he encountered at the Orange River mouth, while Mr. Stafford-Smith played back recorded bird voices. On the second evening Mr. Liversidge gave a talk on feathers, discussing their structure. On the third evening Mr. R. Atwell showed some of his outstanding 16mm colour films of game and bird life in the Luangwa Valley, followed by a film taken by Mr. Popous. On the fourth a quiz was held and this was followed up with the screening of colour transparencies taken by some of the bird photographers. On the fifth Mr. R.W. Rankine from Southern Rhodesia gave a delightful miscellaneous

talk and showed colour transparencies he had taken of game. During the second half of the evening Dr. Broekhuysen screened a selection of his colour bird transparencies.

FIELD OUTINGS.

During the period under review, NINE Field Outings were organised of which one was a week-end camp. The areas visited were: Klipheuvel, Slangkop in the Darling District, Klavers Vlei at Firgrove, Langkloof on Vergelegen, Somerset West Riet Vlei at Milnerton, Eerste Rivier, and Skryvers Hoek on the Langebaan Lagoon. The outings were very well attended and if this continues it will become necessary to split up in smaller groups.

NEWS SHEETS.

Seven issues of the News Sheet were despatched to members and they contained many local topics of interest. On the behalf of the Committee and all our members I thank the editors Miss J. Robinson and Mr. R.K. Schmidt for all the work they have put into it. Members apparently are still reluctant to contribute towards the News Sheet. Once more I would like to urge and to appeal to members to send their observations in.

BEHAVIOUR RECORDS.

The recorder Mr. Schmidt reports that as only Three members have directly submitted notes on behaviour, he has decided to build up the record from observations appearing in the News Sheet. In this 84 behaviour records concerning 60 species have been filed. The Fiscal Shrike tops the list with six records, mostly on food habits, but also on defence of its nest and attack on other birds. Members are strongly urged to contribute observations.

NEST RECORDS.

Mr. John Martin the recorder reports that for the year 1956 379 filled nest-cards were handed in covering 82 species and sent in by 45 persons. Only two members returned more than a hundred cards. These were Jack Macloed with 102 and the recorder himself with 108. Dr. Winterbottom returned 51 and Mr. A.R. Brown 43. Although a large number of members returned only a few cards, these are of no less importance to our records.

On the list of nests of the "not-so-common" species we find those of the Chat-Flycatcher, Long-billed Pipit, Richard's Pipit, Cape Apalis, Victorin's Warbler, Sedge Warbler, S.A. Marsh Warbler, Burchell's Coucal, Mountain Chat, Red-vested Cuckoo, Red-breasted Sparrow Hawk, Blackal Buzzard, Cape Sea Eagle and Yellow-billed Kite.

Surprisingly Red-Capped Larks nest were the most numerous - 25 - in all and nearly found by Dr. Winterbottom.

The recorder points out that no nest should go unrecorded merely because a member did not have cards at the time. There are plenty cards in stock and each member should have sufficient of these for his or her requirements. When asking for cards it would be appreciated if each member stipulated the number of cards required. It has been remarked that certain members could have sent hundreds of records if they had had the cards. Well, we have got the cards-please say how many you want, but please do not leave them lying around unused.

RINGING.

During the period concerned, members ringed 262 birds, covering 35 species. This number is rather small and it is hoped that during the year ahead more activity in this field will be shown.

MEMBERSHIP.

The total number up to date is 199 of which 9 are Life members.

Two prominent ornithologists visited Cape Town during the year and were contacted by members of the Club. They were Professor J. Berlioz from the Natural History Museum in Paris and Mr. J.G. Williams from the Coryndon Museum in Nairobi.

In ending this report I have great pleasure in thanking my fellow members in the Committee for their support and enthusiasm.

On behalf of all the members of the Club I would like to thank Miss Troughton and Miss Clarke for the most efficient way in which they organised tea at the meetings. Professor John Day, head of the department of Zoology is thanked for allowing the Club to hold its meetings in the Department of Zoology.

For Sale:-

Starck and Solater's Birds.

Phone 73787.

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