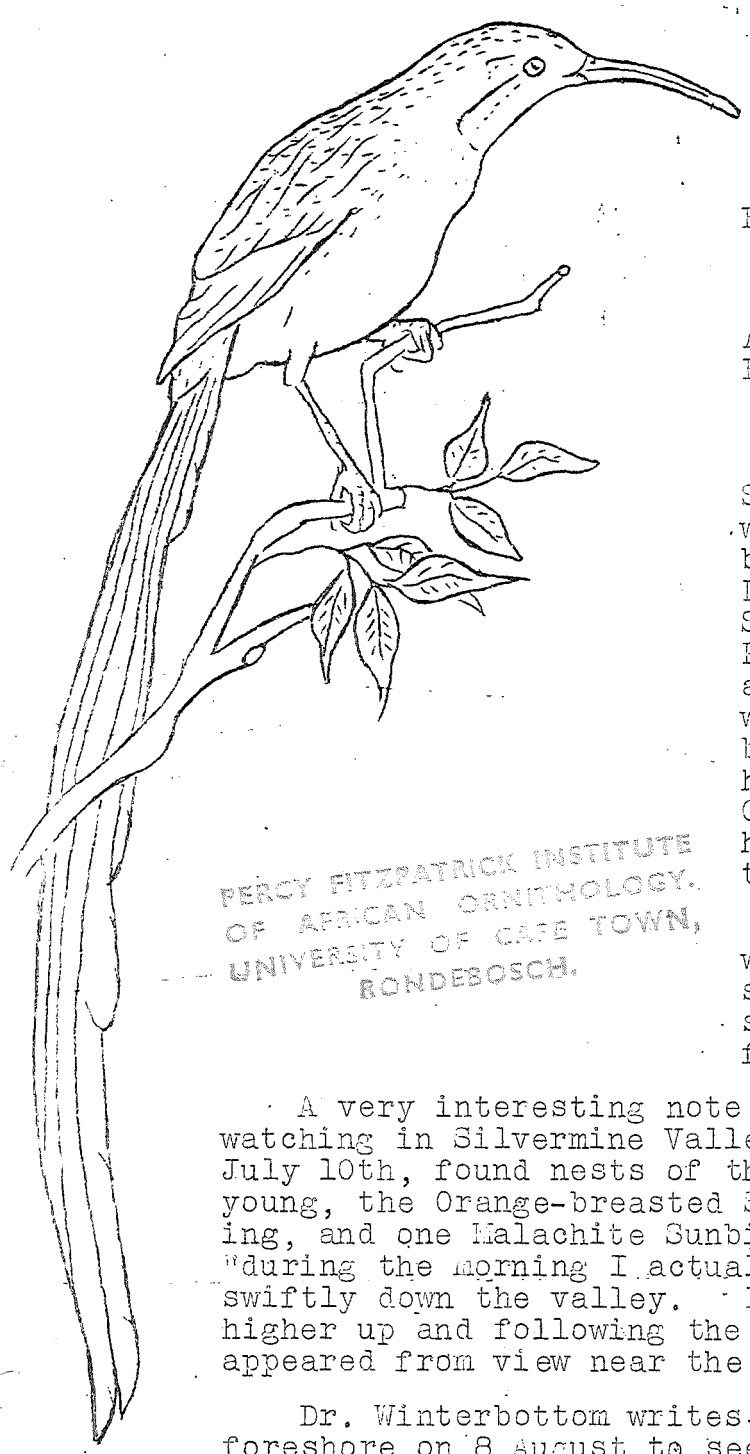

THE CAPE BIRD CLUB

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Editor: Miss J. Robinson, Abberton, Timour Hall Road, Plumstead.

Asst. Editor: Mr. R.K. Schmidt, Striegau, Lympleigh Road, Plumstead.

A lovely day, first real Spring weather. Throughout the whole day the Chaffinches have been chinking and trilling, Doves cooing, Canaries singing, Starlings, both European and Redwing, whistling, White-eyes and Sparrows twittering, a Robin, whose mate is sitting in a near-by hedge, has been signing to her all day, Thrushes, Speckled Colies and Bully Seed-eaters have all been heard in the garden to-day.

Now is the time for all bird watchers to put on their bird spectacles and record all they see, not forgetting to send copy for the News Letter.

A very interesting note from Mr. Brown who, while bird watching in Silvermine Valley, on Muizenberg Mountains on July 10th, found nests of the Cape Sugarbird with eggs and young, the Orange-breasted Sunbird with young and also building, and one Malachite Sunbird building. He says that "during the morning I actually saw a Piet-my-vrou gliding swiftly down the valley. It approached from the wooded area higher up and following the course of the stream finally disappeared from view near the weir."

Dr. Winterbottom writes: "When visiting the Cape Town foreshore on 8 August to see if the Redcapped Larks had begun breeding, I was astonished first to hear and then to see a male Fan-tailed Cisticola performing his song flight there. This is the first time I have found it there and its arrival is no doubt due to the increasing luxuriance of the vegetation as the humus formed by their predecessors enriches the soil. It might be appropriate at this stage to mention species known to be regular, at least seasonally, on the foreshore - (B) indicates breeding or has bred.

Dikkop (B), Kittlitz Sandplover (B), Crowned Plover (B), Black back Gull, Hartlaub's Gull, Ring-necked Dove, Laughing Dove, Black Swift, Red-capped Lark (B), Cape Wagtail (B), Richardson's Pipit (B), Rock Martin, European Starling, Mossie (B), Cape Canary.

This is not a complete list of all the birds which have ocurred but only of those which occur frequently."

On 2nd August Mrs. Patterson saw five Sacred Ibis feeding on the vlei land near Phillippi.)

Has anyone ever seen a Hartlaub's Gull sitting on electric wires? Mrs. Taylor, who saw the bird, says it was rather amusing as it did its best to hold on with its webbed feet and steady itself by flapping its wings.

On/.....

On looking up her notes after reading Dr. Winterbottom's report re Red-eyed Dove in the Gardens, Mrs. Taylor found that she had also heard it there for the first time on September 13th, 1956.

The following is a brief summary of Dr. Millard's lecture given to the Cape Bird Club on 9th August, 1957:

There are two theories about the origin and evolution of birds from their reptilian ancestors. Nopcsa supports the view that birds evolved from a bipedal running reptile using its wings - or pro-wings - for balance.

Heilman again supports the view that birds evolved from some climbing, gliding form, which climbed up trees and then glided from branch to branch. The wings, being the chief gliding organs, developed feathers. This latter theory is supported by the fossil evidence for in Archaeoptrix we have a bird which has claws on the fore-limbs, reptilian teeth in the jaws and a tail (i.e. with vertebrae) which is well feathered.

The study of flight in birds has been greatly augmented by slow motion photography and wind tunnels. The function of the wing is to lift the body and propel it forward. Lift is obtained if a wing is inclined at an angle to the direction of the current and fixed so that it cannot move back - the air current will then force the wing to rise. In birds the momentum of the bird stops the backward movement.

Propulsion is obtained if an upward current meets the inclined wing. The bird's weight will counteract the upward movement and so the bird moves forward. Lift and propulsion are similarly achieved when the wing moves horizontally and vertically respectively.

Lift is increased as the angle between the wing and the air current increases - that is up to a point - the stalling point occurring somewhere between 10^{o} and 20^{o}.

The eddying which causes the stalling can be overcome by a wing slot enabling the air to flow smoothly at greater angles. Slotting devices may consist in spreading the tail to form a slot between tail and the hind margin of the wings, or by twisting the feathers, or the projection of the bastard wing or simply pointed wing feathers.

When a bird takes off a large initial lift is required and this is enabled by the slotting devices which are essential for slow speed flight.

Birds are able to adapt the wings very rapidly from lift to propulsion. This is augmented by twisting the wing at the elbow so that the inner portion is set for lift and the outer for propulsion.

Many birds economise on their energy output by using land or sea air currents. Land soaring birds have short, broad wings - these are easy to manipulate but stall easily so that slotting devices are well developed. They soar upwards in spirals and then glide to the next up current. They are also able to propel themselves by ordinary flapping flight.

Water air currents are horizontal and consist of many small components revolving in horizontal "cylinders". The currents are slow at the surface and faster higher up. The sea-bird then turns against the wind and gains height and then turns with the wind and gains speed but loses

height./....

height. When it starts to lose height it again turns against the wind. Thus it can fly for miles without flapping its wings. Sea-birds rely but little on flapping propulsion and their long pointed wings are well developed soaring organs.

Two records of early arrival of the White Stork: On 14th July D. Pelteret saw one between Klapmuts and Mulder's Vlei, and on 4th August Miss Ethelston saw one between Klapmuts and Abbotsdale.

OWL RESEARCH - VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Members of the Cape Bird Club are invited to volunteer to assist in an investigation of the diet and distribution of owls in the Club's area.

This work can be divided into two separate activities: the collecting of pellets from roosting and nesting sites, and the plotting of the distribution of barn owls.

Owl pellets are required from the permanent nesting/roosting sites of any species. Once the site is located it will mean the collecting of all pellets lying under the roost, and then a regular visit to the site on the first of every month for the collection of further pellets. These are to be despatched to Mr. Davies, Government Ecologist, The S.A. Institute for Medical Research, P.O. Box 1038, Johannesburg. They travel free, providing the parcel is marked "Natural History Specimens" and "O.H.M.S." and can be sent either by post or rail.

The collection of these pellets may also be of great assistance to the ringing scheme. In both the Rondevlei Bird Sanctuary, and on the Witwatersrand, bird rings have been recovered from pellets!

As far as barn owls are concerned, Mr. Davies is anxious to get information which will reflect the size of each bird's territory. It is thought that each bird works an area with a diameter of about two miles. The careful noting of the barn owls' headquarters and their range of hunting grounds will be of immense value.

I wonder how many members who attended the outing to Darling on 18th August noticed a small 'vaatjie' suspended over the gateway to a farm? This 'vaatjie' proved to be a most unusual nesting site as Mr. Martin, when passing the farm, saw a Pied Starling carrying nesting material into the hole at the top of the vaatjie.

On 25th August, while doing a bird count at Riet Vlei, Dr. Winterbottom saw a solitary Spoonbill.

We all know how successful Mr. Macleod is in discovering the nests of Sugarbirds and Sunbirds. Here is a delightful account of the technique he uses which will be very helpful to many of us:

"During the Cape Winter bird watchers are able to concentrate on the Sunbirds and Sugarbirds as these build their nests and rear their broods when most of the other birds are in the off season. In the past few months we have found the nests of over forty Sugarbirds, approximately thirty Orange-breasted Sunbirds, ten Malachite and three Lesser Double Collared's. Many of the nests were destroyed in the winter gales, but at least forty Sugarbirds are flying round at Vergelegen wearing bright silver rings on their right legs and a red celluloid ring on the left. Club members may be interested to know the way we set about finding the nests.

Each bird/....

Each bird requires a different technique and after many years of trial and error we find that the best way to deal with the Sugarbird is to take a folding chair, your binoculars (on a tripod for preference), and find a nice sheltered, sunny corner overlooking a patch of proteas. There will be plenty of long tailed males flying about, but these are of little interest; it is the female we look for. As soon as one appears (identified by the much shorter and straighter tail), watch her carefully. If she darts quickly from flower to flower flicking her wings you can be sure she is off a nest with eggs. Preening is usually a sign that she has young in the nest. The bird does not remain long - soon the urge to brood sends her off and if she raises her wings above the level of her back and planes into a bush you can be sure she has settled on a nest.

The difficulty is to identify the bush, as all protea bushes look the same, and this is where the tripod comes into play. If your binoculars are on a tripod you tighten the locking nut and no matter what happens you have the right bush in the centre of your view. Your companion now walks across to the area where the bird disappeared and you are able to direc him to the exact place. We have found nests three hundred yards away by this method.

The eggs are then measured and a white tape tied to the top of the bush so that you can find it again. If your marker is a strip of calico see that there are no loose threads or Sunbirds will use these threads for nest lining and there is danger of young birds getting their feet entangled, with disastrous results. So much for the Sugarbird.

Sunbirds, both Malachite and Orange-breasted, can be found by watching the female, but these birds being smaller are more difficult to keep in view. With Malachites you can use the "Christmas tree" technique, which although not considered very sporting in the best circles gives very good results with both Malachites and Lesser Double Collared's.

All you require is a piece of cotton wool and a dry bush. The wool is teased out and small pieces fixed in the upper branches so that you have the appearance of a cotton-covered shrub. This works very successfully with Malachite in the open veld as the female can be followed easily when she is carrying a piece of this material. In Malachite Wood this is unnecessary as we know the areas in which the birds nest and find these by walking through the wood searching in the places where they nested the previous year, and usually with success.

There are at the moment (early July) six occupied nests in the wood, a number of them decorated with the white cotton wool we provided.

This technique works very well with the Lesser Double Collared Sunbird as, usually, these birds carry a long way and are most difficult to follow in flight. However they cannot resist the "Christmas tree" and we guarantee results.

With the Orange-breasted Sunbird we do not think it is so successful, as these birds build nests of two kinds, some lined with white, when they look like the inside of a coconut, but usually with the brown fluff from protea, and as there is plenty of this about they are not so attracted by the cotton wool.

Now you know how it is done, go ye and do likewise."