

CAPE BIRD CLUB : KAAPSE VOELWAARNEMERSKLUB

# NEWSLETTER - NUUSBRIEF

No 106 NR 106

October 1973 Oktober

## A CHANCE FOR ACTION

The sub-committee (Dr. G. Currie, Prof. W.R. Siegfried, Messrs. C.H. Elliot, J. Cooper and P. Tongue) of the S.A.O.S. mentioned in Newsletter No. 105, has now met three times and that it means business is clearly demonstrated by its decision to meet at six-weekly intervals come ~~what~~ may. Members of the Cape Bird Club will like to know/its plan of action is this. (a) to identify a conservation problem (b) to organise the collection of information (c) to assemble the information (d) to present a plan of action and (e) to channel the plan to the correct quarters in a manner that would be described as "professional lobbying".

Whilst at this moment the three matters that have come up for discussion are all in the Cape area, it is most definitely not intended that the sub-Committee shall be a local affair but that its activities shall cover the whole of Southern Africa. For all of its objects it will lean heavily on the existing set-up of Bird Clubs, for what bodies other than these exist, with the necessary interest and experience both to collect data and to carry out whatever course of action is recommended. The advantage to be gained now that the sub-Committee exists is that guidelines will be laid down and Clubs' part in the work will be supported officially by professional backing. The sub-Committee itself will also be able to provide a spokesman for such interviews at high levels as may be necessary.

To the acting-editor this means a wonderful opportunity for the Cape Bird Club to take an active part in, what, after all, is one of its primary objects ... the preservation of the avifauna. We all know that many members who would like to "do" something for birds have not sufficient confidence in their knowledge to report of their observations. And whilst the recording of unusual sightings is of interest, and add to the knowledge of the distribution of birds, they are of comparatively small importance to preservation. This is not to discourage anyone from reporting observations, especially those concerning behaviour etc., but now that it is generally recognised that habitat destruction is the prime cause of the decline in populations, we have something that everyone can see for himself, and in which we can all help.

There is another aspect of preservation/protection which should be emphasised, and that is that if we want birds we must be willing to pay for them. This is so obvious a fact that it should not need stating ... but just as music-lovers pay for their music, motorists for their cars, the hungry for their food, why should not bird lovers pay something for their birds? All the Bird Clubs run on shoe-string finances and I do urge any member who has generous impulses should give way to them at once ... before second thoughts inhibit them ... the Club's Treasurer (Mr. K.K. Morgan,

EDITOR • R. K. SCHMIDT "STRIEGAS" LYMPLEIGH RD PLUMSTEAD CAPE  
REDAKTEUR • LYMPLEIGHWEG PLUMSTEAD KAAP

P.O. Box 21, Sea Point) will be delighted (and perhaps surprised?) to receive donations. Seriously, though, we shall have to see what can be done to put ourselves on a more affluent footing won't we?

As the advertisers sometimes say WATCH THIS COLUMN FOR FURTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS .....

Notes and Comments

There seems to be, if anything, too much to print in this issue, and as the envelopes we use have a limit to what they will comfortably contain, it was decided that three sheets of Newsletter plus the coming programme page, must be the maximum. If members who have written fail to find mention, will they please accept my apologies together with this for a reason?

Aughrabies National Park

Mrs. Rowan has sent me this interesting comment on the article under the heading of "Holidays" in No. 105.

"... I was a little disappointed to see no reference to one of the most delightful birds to be found there, the Cinnamon-breasted Warbler. As this is a species that few people ever see, partly because of its highly localized occurrence and somewhat limited range, it is perhaps worth drawing attention to its presence in the Park.

"One's best chance of seeing it is at a place like Ararat, where the slopes are covered with the dark brown and blackish rocks, typical of certain Karoo formations. There it may be spotted, working under and over the boulders and along clefts and crannies, with the same sort of thoroughness and quick restlessness that a white-eye exhibits when working through the foliage. It is a very active little bird, darting hither and thither - now you see it, now you don't - but the few I have watched have all been quite unafraid and confiding. Sometimes the bird may pause momentarily to cling to a vertical rock face and then may do so at any angle, from head upwards to head downwards. Its movements are rather jerky, reminiscent of a clockwork toy, and the tail is continuously flicked up and down and sideways, sometimes fanned or half-fanned and sometimes closed. It is a delightful bird to watch as it darts and leaps about the rocks, and the general impression it gives is of a charcoal grey bird with rufous tail coverts and an occasional flash of warmer cinnamon as its undersurface is revealed. I have only once heard one call and the utterance was not a didric-like "dui dui", as described in Roberts, but a stuttering string of notes, not unlike a Prinia."

Airguns and the Like

The Cape Times dated August 1, 1973 contained a paragraph about the use of airguns etc. which members of the Bird Club might like to remember.

At the monthly meeting of the City Council on July 31, approval was given to regulations drafted on the recommendation of its deputy chairman, Mr. W.J. Peters. They prohibit the discharge of any firearm, or any air, gas or alarm gun in the streets, public places, private property or any place where injury or damage is likely to be caused. Offenders face fines of up to R100 or imprisonment of up to three months.

Of course nobody expects these penalties to be enforced, but since many members like to warn boys wandering about with airguns not to use them on livestock in general and birds in particular the possibility of a heavy penalty being levied may lend an additional weight to a remonstrance.

It is of course taken for granted that members do not give way to children's pleading for a gun and, indeed, that they try to influence their less bigoted friends to do the same .....

On Reading the Small Type

It is with pleasure that I and perhaps most Club members will note that the conditions printed on the back of the Permit to Silvermine area include "8. Radios and recordplayers may not be played in the picnic areas except by arrangement with the Director, Parks & Gardens, in the case of special

group functions". Loud cheers !

### Bokmakerie

We are asked to announce that the new and correct address for Bokmakerie is P.O. Box 9081, Johannesburg.

The Committee and Members of the Cape Bird Club wish to express their sympathy with Mrs. Rowan on the death of her husband in August.

### Club Activities

Members' Evening on July 20, just too late for mention in the last Newsletter, brought the expected crop of slides. There are plenty of good photographers in the Club, besides the top-class experts, and Members' Evening is always enjoyable; indeed the full house testified to the interest we all have in our fellow-members' work. I do not feel that any one should be singled out as the good photographs were plainly visible to us all, but I do feel that the work of one of our young members Hamish Robertson should have a word of praise because here, it seems, we have someone clearly to keep an eye on. I hope that we may see some more of his shots at the next Members' Evening.

Those contributing slides, in strict alphabetical order (!) were Mrs. Chaundy, Mr. Gregory, Mr. Kakabeeke, Hamish Robertson, Mr. M.B. Rowlands, Mr. O. Schmidt, Mr. M. Trew, Mr. Zammit and Miss Zammit.

On August 10 Beaumont Rowlands, also one of our younger members, gave us a talk with slides about a visit he made to Mauritius and the Cargados Carajos Archipelago, in 1971. Mr. Rowlands presented his facts clearly and with enthusiasm; his photographs were excellent and I should not be surprised to hear more of him, one day, as a seabird expert.

He showed slides of a number of species, of which I enjoyed especially the Tropic Birds (39 & 40) which, with their slender wings and long tails must be one of the most graceful of all birds; confined more or less to tropical seas, it is of interest that the earliest fossil tropic bird was found in England (English one-upmanship!). Another striking bird with absolute mastery of the air, is the Great Frigate Bird (53), this species being found only in the South Atlantic, off the coast of Brazil, in these Indian Ocean Islands and in Western Australia. Never settling on the water, these fine birds live by piracy, and to judge by the numbers in some of the slides, must make a handsome living that way.

Terns and the tropical terns known as Noddies are plentiful in the islands, and the immense number of nests and eggs shown (and not only of these species) demonstrates that up to the present, the islands are keeping up their populations. It was a pleasure to see such abundance.

But birds aside, the photographs of the scenes on the way were most interesting to those who like to travel. Mr. Rowlands surely should be congratulated on his enterprise and the determination he showed in sticking to his intentions and seeing all he set out to see.

### Excursion to Nooitgedacht. August 5th.

A glorious if somewhat cold day made this a memorable one. Nooitgedacht farm lies on the farther side of the Diep Rivier (which rises to the south of Malmesbury and ends up among the devastation of Riet Vlei) and most members spent their time walking downstream through low bush with occasional large trees. Cultivated farmlands press close to the valley, making it a last refuge for the bush birds that must once have had a vastly greater terrain to inhabit. Habitat destruction in the interests of feeding the nation.

The collective list, built up from those of three experts and a number of conversations totalled 59 species and there must have been few members who did not log over 25. There were 4 ducks (Yellowbill (96), Shoveller (94), Redbill Teal (97) & Egyptian Goose (89) and a good variety of the usual bush birds ... Crombec (621), cisticolas (three species noted) Tit-babbler (658), Fiscal Flycatcher (665) being among the more interesting sightings. What pleased us most were two Spotted Eagle Owls (368) that most obligingly remained in the vicinity and, after being encouraged to fly around, returned to a large

gum, and perched in its branches for the rest of the day. A Hammerkop's nest (72), also in a gum, was found to contain an Egyptian Goose; not an unusual resident in such places.

Excursion to Botma's Kloof. August 19.

The weather in Town on the morning of August 19 was overcast with the wind coming from the North. In spite of these omens, over a dozen cars turned up at the meeting place. This optimism was not justified however, because it rained most of the day.

Birds don't like rain any more than their watchers, do. It was noticeable that twice we walked up the hill as the rain eased off, in an ornithological void, and, as soon as the rain stopped and the sun came out, the birds began to call and move about.

So we didn't see many birds ... the laurels going to Mrs. Davis and Mrs. White who saw the Fairy Flycatcher (678). Botma's Kloof is surely the nearest place to Cape Town to see this delightful species.

The camping weekend at Cogma's Kloof, near Montague, Stan Clarke tells me, was not very well attended; even so many people preferred to camp in the Montague hotels. About 20 members turned up and saw, among other birds the Namaqua Trinia (653) and the Tambourine Dove (319). In the absence of Keith Morgan who has a list of species, and the presence of the deadline for going to press (roneo), further information is lacking.

The same must also be said of Guy Currie's talk "Illustrated Topics" at the Zoology Theatre on Friday the 14th September. Alan Morris tells me that it was thoroughly enjoyable and that the slides were as excellent as those who know Guy Currie would expect. He added that it deserved a better attendance. It might be noted that this is the first time that the screen kindly donated to the Club by African Explosives, was used.

Members' Reports

Miss Dorothy Clarke noted, among other species, two White Storks in June on the Theronsberg Pass near Ceres.

May the acting editor remind all members that MIGRANTS are arriving now and that the more reports we receive the more our professional ornithologists will like us .....

STOP PRESS. I have just heard the first Piet-my-Vrou (343) of this season at Wynberg Park. Who can improve on this?

Cape Sugar Bird (749).

An Albino female was seen in the Helderberg Nature Reserve on July 27, 1973. This bird was previously observed in the proximity of the small dam, by another CBC member, Mr. Ronald Mew a couple of weeks earlier. Whilst watching the albino a Wild Black Duck (95) was seen to fly out of the dam and a Giant King fisher (395) made a dive into the water from the Oak Forest. This is the first time I have recorded this species in the Reserve.

P.S. Lockhart. Somerset West.

Hadedda (84)

I would like to inform you of a sight and voice record of the Hadedda. Three birds were flying above a cliff at the top end of de Hoop Vlei (34. 25'S. 20. 19'E), district Bredasdorp on the 15th August, 1973, giving their characteristic call. Two other officers of the Research Station and my wife also observed these birds, which appears to be a new distributional record.

M.H. Currie. Andries Venter Research Station. Stellenbosch.

Because space is short this month, only extracts from interesting letters from three members are given. Miss M. Hartley (Kenilworth) saw what she feels was almost certainly a Glossy Ibis (93) at Tamatie Vlei about the end of June; she felt that it was too dark for a Hadedda (84) .. but in view of Mr. Currie's report has anyone else any more information from this locality? She also noted a Burchell's Coucal (356). One of the officials there informed her that 250 Mallard (!!) had been liberated in the area; this is enough to terrify anyone concerned with native birds, but enquiries caused the alarm to abate; some African duck have been introduced but not Mallard.

Mr. Arthur Gregory following up the mention in No. 104 about freshwater birds on the shore, mentions a Little Egret (59) seen at Cape Point. Little Egrets are very often seen on shores. A few are usually to be seen at Olifants Bay, and on a recent visit to Lourenco Marques (what HAS L.M. to do with Western Cape Birds!) there were always half a dozen feeding, I think, on shore crabs, at low tide. He also recorded a Water Dikkop (274) .. Middlemiss (Avifauna Series. PF1A0, 1969) lists the Cape Dikkop (275). Are you sure it was a Water Dikkop Mr. Gregory?

### Conservation

This subject has made the headlines to this issue, so that little need be said here. But I should like first to suggest, as some more essential reading a short book published by that militant conservation organisation THE FRIENDS OF THE EARTH (under which it appears in the author catalogue) with the title of The Stockholm Conference; Only One Earth. The Libraries have it and its number is 301.31.Fri. I quote.

Man likes to think that he has somehow stopped being a part of nature -- that he controls nature and can do what he likes to nature without putting himself in danger. This is not true. Nature laughs last. It is one of nature's rules that those who won't play by the rules won't play at all. Nature has often invoked this rule; every living thing that has ever tried to use more energy or matter than the world can provide, is now dead. All that now lives has grown in such a way that it lives on the earth's terms -- otherwise it would not now be living. Man must do this also, or he will meet the same fate as any other "mistake" on evolution; for there is no reason why everything should come right in the end. The earth doesn't care. It was here long before we were, and will be here even longer after we leave -- and perhaps it will be more comfortable without us. We have forgotten how to be good guests, how to walk lightly on the earth as its other creatures do.

Those who read the book ... and it is well worth it ... may feel that the F.O.E. overstates its case, as, indeed, I think it does in some respects. But the message is as clear as that famous writing on the wall even if well discounted

### A Flamingo Symposium at Slimbridge

Our Prof. Broekhuysen was in England early in July as representative of the S. African Branch of the International Council for Bird Preservation's Flamingo Work Group. The meeting was held at Slimbridge which has the most complete collection of wildfowl in the world, including all six species of Flamingo, some of which have bred there.

The first part of the proceedings concerned the chief countries with Flamingo populations ... under the heading Population, Distribution and Ecology. The second day was devoted to "Maintenance in Captivity" in the morning, Ethology and Taxonomy in the afternoon ... the symposium winding up on the third day with papers on Diets Pigments and Physiology. Of the whole proceedings, the first day provided the more matter of general interest, and included papers on Greater Flamingoes in Asia; the Camargue Flamingo, .. now one of France's tourist attractions, with the advantages and disadvantages it brings with it, Flamingoes in Mauretania where as many as 32,000 Greater Flamingoes have been counted, a most important paper by Dr. Leslie Brown from Kenya, who is one of the great flamingo authorities, on East African Flamingoes; a review of present knowledge. The East African population of the Lesser Flamingo is estimated at about 6 million birds; that of the Greater, at a mere 50,000. Dr. Brown mentioned that they fly only by day, which limits the distance covered, and claims that this isolates the East African populations from those of Tanzania, Southern Kenya and S. Africa. Mr. H.H. Berry of the Dept. of Nature Conservation and Tourism in S.W. Africa read a paper on Flamingoes Breeding at Etosha Pan, with some interesting information about the long-distance migration of chicks after the water had dried up. To end the morning, Dr. Broekhuysen spoke about The Status of Greater & Lesser Flamingoes in South and South West Africa, summarising the distribution and the few instances of breeding.

After lunch a depressing picture of the state of the South American Flamingoes was read by Mr. A. Morrison; a continent where political instability

and widespread corruption, added to a total lack of interest, prevails. Two papers that day mentioned the advantages that came to flamingo populations in the Camargue and in the Caribbean by the establishment of salt works. The first day ended with a paper by Dr. M.P. Kahl, Secretary of the Flamingo Work Group, on the world distribution of its flamingoes. As readers will gather from the brief notes of the proceedings of the two subsequent days, matters then passed into the purely scientific and commercial (if one may regard zoos in that light) aspects of the bird.

Report on Field Cards of the Cape Bird Club

The collection of Field Cards continues to grow steadily, if not as fast as it might. In addition to the Organiser, Messrs. P.S. Lockhart and P. Tongue have submitted cards regularly and other members (Miss D. Clark, Miss Williams, etc.) more sporadically.

We now have over 500 cards for Permanent Vleis (756), Temporary Vleis (549), Macchia (637) and Coastal Macchia (509). Other habitats with between 100 and 350 cards are: Offshore, Rocky Coasts, Sandy Coasts, Lagoons, Coastal Renosterbosveld, Strandveld, Indigenous Forest, Wattles, Grain Fields, Pastures, and Town Gardens.

On the other hand, there are fewer than ten cards for any of the following habitats: Oceanic (beyond the 3-mile limit), Sea Cliffs, Reservoirs, Sand Dunes, False Macchia, Mountain Renosterbosveld, Precipices (inland), Quarries and Commercial Vegetable Gardens. A good many of these have very sparse avifaunas but we need to know what they are. We also need more lists from Montagu, Vanrhynsdorp and Wellington.

(J.M. Winterbottom)

Who to Send What to and Where

- (1) NESTS Nest record cards obtainable free from Mr. G. Underhill, P.O. Box 3371, Cape Town.
- (2) FIELD CARDS From and to Dr. J.M. Winterbottom, 9 Alexandra Road, Oranjezicht. Phone 45-4034. Also free.
- (3) MIGRATION Report ALL migratory birds seen during the months February to November inclusive to Mr. G. Wilson, 5 Brantwood, Blaauwberg Road, Table View.  
DO NOT send for December and January. Report NUMBER seen, date, and do not omit WHERE you saw them. Time is often useful too.
- (4) BEHAVIOUR This is Mrs. Rowan's speciality. It is suggested that reports should be sent to the Editor of the Newsletter, who, even if they are not printed (when they are, Mrs. Rowan picks them up from the journal) will be passed on to her. Behaviour includes food and feeding.
- (5) ANYTHING ELSE to the Editor of the Newsletter.

Evening Meetings

- Friday 19 October : (Hot) and Cold -- this talk was to have been given by Prof. Siegfried but he is standing down to allow Mr. Tony Williams, a new research officer at Fitzpatrick, to talk to us and show his excellent slides on the birds of the Artic Islands and the arctic areas of Norway. The second part of the title should apply! This promises to be a good evening breaking new ground for the Club.
- Friday 9 November : Bird Migration and its Study -- Mr. Clive Elliot, whose lecture was cancelled earlier this year, will now be talking to us about a very vital subject for all Club members. Please come along and support Mr. Elliot who is in charge of the National Bird Ringing Unit.
- Friday 23 November : Bird Watching Illustrated with Films and Slides -- the title of Mr. Johannesson's evening speaks for itself - and the photographer needs no introduction.

All evening meetings in the Zoology Block at 8.15 p.m.

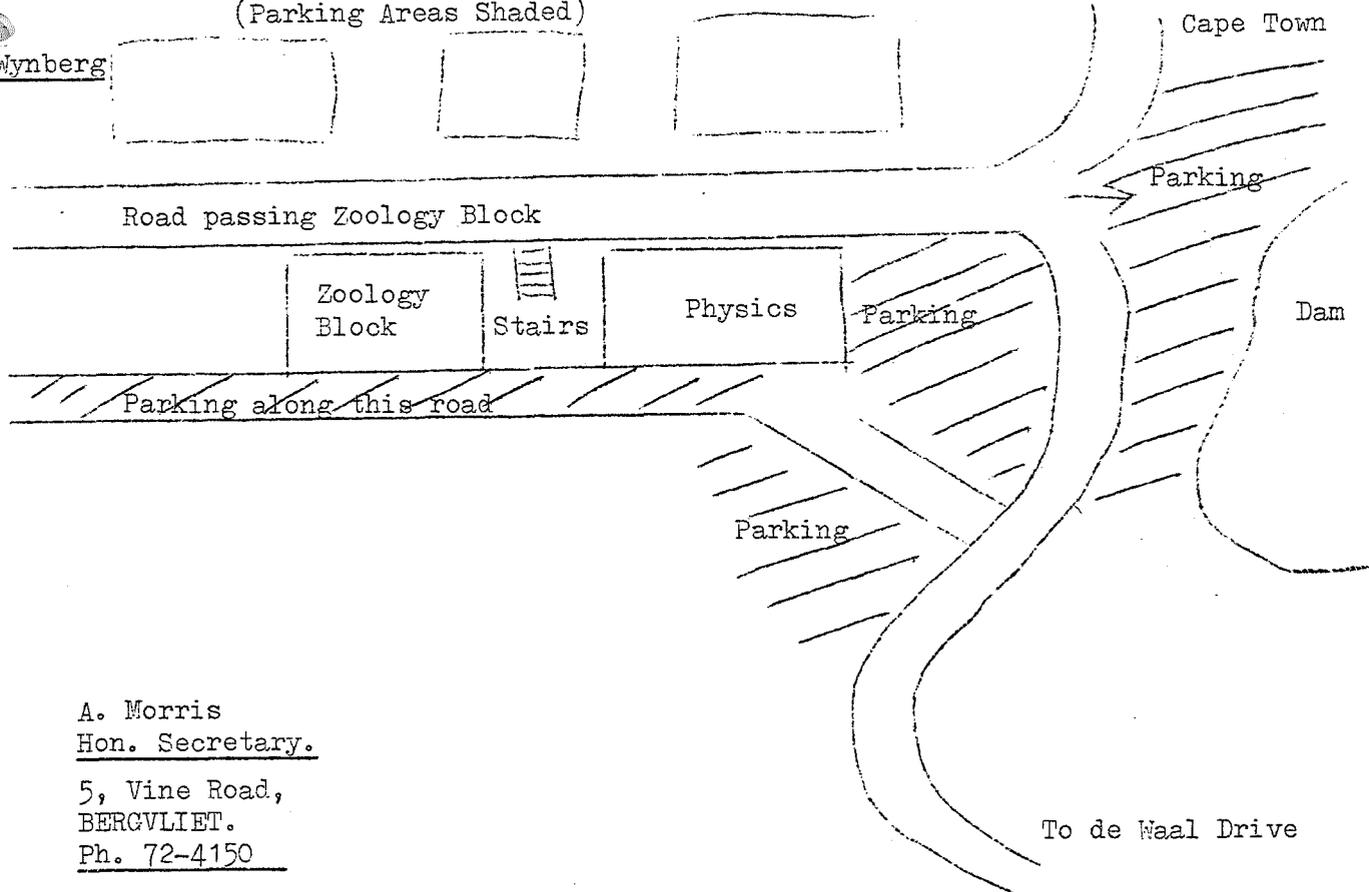
Excursions

- Sunday 7 October : DOORN RIVIER -- Meet in front of the hotel in Villiersdorp at 10 a.m. The excursion leader will escort cars to Doorn Rivier.
- Sunday 11 November : Jonkershoek -- Drive through Stellenbosch so as to meet at the end of the tar road leading into the Jonkershoek Reserve at 10a.m.

Entrance to Zoology Block: Due to new security rules the door to this block must be closed during meetings. To help members we have arranged for the door to be open between 8 and 8.30 p.m. and again for a few minutes at the end of the meeting for those not going to tea.

Parking: This is becoming a problem at evening meetings and to make this easier here is a map showing parking areas convenient to the Zoology Block:-

(Parking Areas Shaded)



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