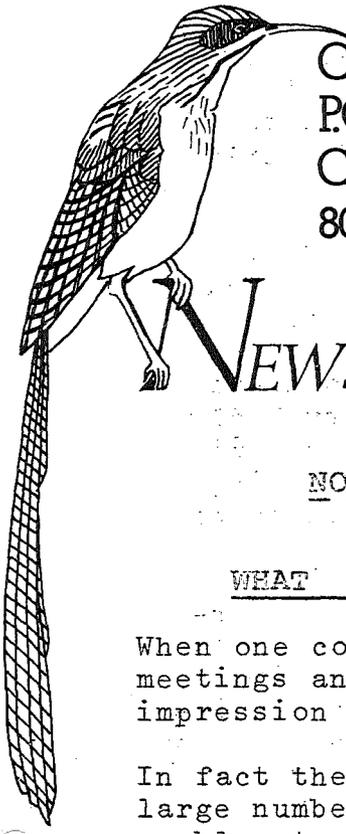


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CAPE



CAPE BIRD CLUB — KAAPSE VOËLWAARNEMERSKLUB
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NEWSLETTER

NUUSBRIEF

NO. 113 NOVEMBER 1974 NR. 113.

WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE CAPE BIRD CLUB?

When one considers the attendance of members to evening meetings and to excursions one certainly gets the impression that the C.B.C. members are keen and active.

In fact the attendance to excursions is so good that the large number of people turning up sometimes presents a problem to the organisers.

But rather unfortunately, how wrong is this impression! Members are quick enough to contact the Committee by phoning or writing to the secretary and asking what action the Cape Bird Club has taken in connection with certain conservation problems, or against threat to certain areas or the proposed Kirstenbosch highway or experimental work with animals, etc. What is the Cape Bird Club doing in response to the appeal by Italian ornithologists to support their effort to protect the birds in their country? Remember that it is very easy to make suggestions and ask questions without offering help. To contribute constructively, to come with suggestions, and to offer to organise is most valuable, but when is the Committee approached in this way? It is quite clear that if our members are asked to help, to contribute actively to certain schemes and to gather essential information and facts, the response is very poor to say the least of it.

Quite recently the Cape Bird Club was asked by the Conservation Sub-Committee of the South African Ornithological Society to organise and undertake the erecting of informative notice boards on the Lamberts Bay breeding colony, one of the most accessible places where one can watch gannets, cormorants and penguins breeding. This is a very worthwhile project which was long overdue and which required not only a considerable amount of organisation but also hard cash. The Committee did the organising and then turned to the members for help in obtaining the necessary finance. Here was a chance for members to participate actively in this scheme by donating towards it. I would have thought that the response would have been very good. In actual fact the response has been rather disappointing. Remember that quite recently members were circulated and invited to express their opinion about whether the Cape Bird Club should be more active in the conservation field and the replies received were overwhelmingly in favour of such a move. Why then this apathy when asked for contributions in the form of a donation. Surely one can contribute at least TWO RANDBS for such a worthwhile cause? If each member would do this this would pay for more than the required costs.

An even worse example of the apparent unwillingness of members to participate actively in a very important project is the question of restarting the bird counts along the shores and on the water of Sandvlei (formerly called Lakeside).

About 20 years ago a team of keen members of the C.B.C. carried out bird censuses at Zeekoe Vlei, Rondevlei and Lakeside (Sandvlei) for several years. At that time Sandvlei was unspoilt and little affected by human activity. There was no trouble to find enough members to help counting. Now Sandvlei has suffered very badly from human interference and is nearly completely occupied by a Marina, attractive perhaps, but certainly clashing heavily with the bird life for which Sandvlei used to be so well known. The profound effect on the birds is pretty obvious but we have no actual facts, that is to say data. The ecologist employed by the Marina is perturbed about the adverse effect on the bird life and would very much like to have data which can be compared with that collected when Sandvlei was still natural and undisturbed. He turned to the Cape Bird Club with the request to help him in this matter. Counts of birds under present conditions and comparison with what the counts revealed when conditions were natural could be of great value in the planning and placing of future marinas and could lead to certain adaptations being made in the present Marina at Sandvlei, such as making certain areas suitable, available, and attractive to marsh and water birds.

Your Committee saw the immense importance of such an undertaking and an appeal was made to members to participate in these counts. Twenty years ago there was no problem and there were lots of volunteers, but now it is a problem and only the same small number of people, who already do so much in the Club, came forward. The excuse of not knowing the birds sufficiently is invalid as the counting will be done in pairs, and one of the pair will know the birds. An ideal opportunity I would think to get to know the birds and to become one of the knowledgeable watchers.

Here is an ecologist employed by a Housing Scheme Company, who is worried about the detrimental effect the human interference has had on the bird life of the area and who likes to make the best of it. For this he needs data which the Cape Bird Club is the obvious organisation to provide and collect, but which due to the reluctance of its members to participate, it now finds difficult to provide.

WHAT AN IMPRESSION THIS MUST CREATE!

Are we just a gathering of people who pay a subscription and expect to be entertained by evening shows and excursions, all laid on and organised by a handful of active people? Are we not prepared to contribute actively to the solution of certain pressing problems and in by doing so to enhance the Cape Bird Club's image as an organisation actively engaged in the study and protection of our bird life? If this is the case then there is something seriously wrong with the Cape Bird Club.

Would it not be time to change our attitude and start DOING things instead of expecting things to be done.

What about our membership? The South Western Cape Branch of the Wildlife Society has in the last year more than doubled its membership. The membership of the Cape Bird Club has remained stagnant.

WHY CAN THEY DO IT AND WHY CAN WE NOT?

GERRY BROEKHUYSEN (CHAIRMAN).

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

LAMBERTS BAY.

The notice board which the C.B.C., (acting on a request from the Conservation Committee of the SAOS), is in the process of having prepared for the Lamberts Bay Bird Island, should be ready in the foreseeable future, and members will, no doubt, be pleased to hear that the whole idea has been received with great interest from several organisations in the area. The Municipality of Lamberts Bay is reported to be delighted, for it will provide something for visitors and be a real addition to the somewhat limited attractions of that remote little town. A rumour has also reached the editor that the Guano Board now a branch of the Sea Fisheries department, was also happy about it.

This sort of thing is much more important than perhaps realised, for it brings to the notice of both officialdom and the public, the need to protect our birds and, still more important, that there is both an organised body of opinion and a fount of expert knowledge the existence of which can be of the utmost importance both now and in the near future. Members of the Bird Club, just by being members, are contributing to the preservation of their country, and are doing a vitally important job.
.....MORE MEMBERS PLEASE.....

A proposal was recently made to your Committee that a weekend trip should be arranged, by bus, at an inclusive price for travel and accomodation to Lambert's Bay, once the board is erected, since it is now too far for a weekend trip because of the petrol restrictions.

WHAT DO MEMBERS THINK?

THE KIRSTENBOSCH FREEWAY.

Professor R.D. Cherry of the U.C.T. has asked the Club to add its voice to the protests against the construction of the freeway that will so seriously harm the environment of the Kirstenbosch gardens, a decision concerning which now rests with the Administrator. This was discussed at a Committee meeting on October 28th when it was felt that the Club could raise no objection of a specific nature, but only a general one, and such would scarcely influence him. It was however unanimously agreed that personal letters from members ought to be encouraged, and you are urged to write yourself to the Administrator, at the Provincial Building, Wale Street and, as W.S. Gilbert wrote "express your views in what language you choose"..... and make it clear beyond doubt that environmental considerations ought to be paramount here.

CYPRUS.

In NEWSLETTER No. 107 (December 1973) we asked members to protest about the annual slaughter of migrant passerines, taken by limed sticks and pickled for export. It would appear that the protest has had some effect, for a letter in the September/October issue of BIRDS, the journal of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds contains a letter stating that recently the government has formed a special department to look after Cyprus wildlife and that a "Game and Wild Birds" bill, when enacted, will provide, among other matters, that "no person is allowed to shoot, kill, catch, or pursue any game of wild bird by the use of lime-sticks or any other type of trap".

What has happened to these good intentions since the Turkish invasion of the island is not known, but at least we should note that birdwatchers' protests did result in some action being taken.

CHRISTMAS.

The Committee of the Cape Bird Club wishes all its members a very happy Christmas and looks forward to another enjoyable year for us all.

This is the appropriate place to mention that subscriptions are due at the beginning of 1975 and that their prompt receipt makes the lot of Keith Morgan happier Every letter that has to be sent reminding members that their subs are unpaid costs money that would be far better devoted to furthering the Club's objects the preservation and conservation of our avifauna, and occupies time, freely given by our Hon. Treasurer, that he could devote to less unpleasant duties!

PROGRAMME 1975.

Information about next year's plans will be circulated early in the New Year, but for some time your Committee has felt that more flexibility might be achieved if, whilst DATES were fixed, the actual events might be notified at, say, three-monthly intervals, and this is what will be done. Should it not achieve any noticeable flexibility, the decision will be reviewed before 1976.

MEMBERS' REPORTS.

BLACK-BREASTED SNAKE EAGLE?

On the warm, even hot, afternoon of Friday September 20 on entering Malmesbury, enroute to Clanwilliam, I was surprised to see a fairly large raptor, wheeling slowly round, just above the middle of the town, in bright sunlight. A good sighting was obtained with the naked eye, and even a better one with binoculars, and it was undoubtedly a Black-breasted Snake Eagle. I had ROBERTS with me, and consulted the silhouette in figure 4. The bird came down quite low and had a good look at the bustling town, and then veered off in the direction of Riebeeck West. The black breast and white underparts, without any spotting were clearly visible. In any case, size alone ruled out the Martial Eagle (142) and the black breast, the Augur Buzzard (=152). I have seen these raptors in the Kruger National Park, Wankie Game Reserve and South West Africa.

P.S. LOCKHART. SOMERSET WEST.

A Black-backed Gull (287) was seen on November 4, with a nest containing three eggs, close by the road, in a clump of sour figs (Carpobrotus) in the sewage disposal works (Tamatie Vlei).

ALAN MORRIS. BERGVLIET.

CONSERVATION NEWS.

If any members feel that conservation is being well looked after, they would find it salutary to read ORYX, the journal of the Fauna Preservation Society of London. This must be one of the most depressing5.

journals in the world, and quite unequalled as a record of the overwhelming priority of profits over protection the lip service paid to environmental destruction and the killing instincts in man as strong to-day as they were when no killing meant no food.

If I report from its pages from time to time, it is merely to remind members that they are engaged in a battle against forces that we cannot control, that the chances of winning it are remote and that as people with an interest in birds, it is our duty to WORK for conservation in the Western Cape not just to read the newsletter and attend the meetings.

APPEALS FOR INFORMATION.

FLAMINGOES.

The International Council for Bird Preservation is conducting an enquiry into the status of the Lesser and Greater Flamingo. The representative for South Africa on the Flamingo Working Roup is Mr. H.H. Berry, Ecological Institute, Etosha National Park, OKAUKEUJO.

He writes it will be greatly appreciated if you can indicate what flamingo activity has been recorded by your Society during the 1973/1974 season.

This is something to which any observant member may be able to contribute from his notes; the information required is as follows:-

- 1) Place (co-ordinate or distance and direction from nearest town)
- 2) Date
- 3) Total number
- 4) Percentage adults
- 5) Number of breeding pairs
- 6) Any nuptial display
- 7) Percentage moulting (i.e. in a flightless condition).

All data supplied will be acknowledged in the report to the I.C.B.P. If no information is available or if no flamingoes were observed, kindly state that this was the case.

Any member with any information about Flamingoes in the C.B.C. area is urged to send it to Prof. G.J. Broekhuysen, at the CBC's Box No. P.O. Box 5022, CAPE TOWN. 8000.

..... AND JACKASS PENGUINS

As part of a detailed study of the Jackass Penguin the Percy Fitzpatrick Institute is investigating the range and movements of the bird.

Information on juvenile/adult ratios is required for different parts of the coast. Please send details of penguins seen at sea, with group size, number of adults and juveniles, with the date of observation and position to Mr. J. Cooper, P.F.I.A.O., University of Cape Town, RONDEBOSCH. 7700. All material will be acknowledged.

MIGRATION RECORDS.

Please note that in future, all you are asked to record are:-

- 1) The EARLIEST arrival dates
- 2) The BULK arrival dates
- 3) The BULK departure
- 4) All-over (wintering) records. That means migrants remaining in South Africa from March to October.

RECORD SPECIES NO. OF BIRDS SEEN DATE AND LOCALITY.

CLUB ACTIVITIESFIELD EXCURSION TO RAWSONVILLE MARSHES. SUNDAY OCTOBER 20.

Mr. P.S. Lockhart reports that despite the showery weather, a good number of members turned up, although some had had difficulty in locating the venue! From a combination of the lists kept by Prof. Broekhuysen and Messrs. Lockhart, Morgan and Myburgh, a total of 66 species was recorded. Among these, the most interesting were No. 69 Night Heron (1 seen), 85 Spoonbill (1), 167 Marsh Harrier (pair) and 631 Cloud Cisticola (2).

Two Nests of the White-throated Swallow (495) were seen each with 4 eggs, both under road culverts, and of the African Quail (189) and Cape Longclaw (703) were found by several members. Two Painted Snipe (230) were also seen.

FIELD EXCURSION TO KLAVER VLEI, SATURDAY NOVEMBER 8-

Klaver Vlei has always been a favourite with members and at least seventy turned up for this, the last of the year's excursions. It was bright and windy, and it was probably due to the wind that there were so few birds on the vlei; indeed from that point of view, it was a slightly disappointing day. Nonetheless, by combining the lists compiled by Keith Morgan, Pat Lockhart, and a consortium of Tongue-Hartley-Dr. Saunders, a total of 49 was recorded. To mention the not-quite-usual species there was 57 Purple Heron, 154 Steppe Buzzard obviously a very recent arrival, as the bulk of the migrant Steppe Buzzards is yet to come ... the head and rapidly vanishing posterior of 208 Purple Gallinule and 397 Malachite Kingfisher were also noted. Paradise Flycatchers (682) were obviously nesting, though no one I spoke to had found the nest. But the chief delight of Klaver Vlei is its situation in a quiet backwater with the Eerste River quite as attractive as the vlei. Although, at present, it is indeed far from the development area of Cape Town, it would be hard to say for how long this happy state of affairs would hold. This is why a proposal was made to your Committee to ask its owners, the Faure brothers to agree to its being proclaimed a Private Nature reserve..... a proposal to which they were in complete agreement. It is hoped that further steps may now be taken to make the proposal a reality. There are few more desirable spots so close to the city.

JOINT EDITORS RUDOLF SCHMIDT AND PHILIP TONGUE.

Please send all communications to P.O. Box 5022, CAPE TOWN, 8000.