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NEWSLETTER

NUUSBRIEF

NO. 121 NR

MARCH 1976 MAART

Editors: Rudolf Schmidt and Philip Tongue.

Please address all communications to the Club's P.O. Box.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

THIS NEWSLETTER is the first that has been wholly produced by the Club. For many years it was done for us by the Department of Zoology, and then, when this came to an end, through the kindness of Miss Iris Zammit who made the facilities she had at her disposal available to us. Our gratitude to both the Department and Miss Zammit is still very alive among us but, with the growth of membership and of the NEWSLETTER itself, the Committee felt that the Club was accepting more than seemed quite proper. So during the past few months a duplicator and typewriter have been added to our assets and a team of ladies is now in being and presents its first fruits herewith.

Perhaps this is an appropriate place to make apologies for frightful errors in the last NEWSLETTER. The two that the Editors spotted are these. To Dr J.M. Winterbottom, whose interesting report on his journey round Southern Africa as leader of an American party of birdwatchers went unacknowledged, and to John Cooper for attributing his report on the Pied Starlings taking fur from a dead Bat-eared Fox to Mr. E.L. Roberts, my apologies...me, being Philip Tongue, as Rudolf Schmidt had no part in this!

KLEINMOND LAGOON

I, Philip Tongue, camped for one night at Kleinmond Lagoon in mid-February and found it to hold a considerable number of birds, both resident and migrant. The lagoon is so far unspoiled though the Municipality is occupied in dumping soil into a reed-bed with the wholly laudable object (from the ratepayers point of view) of converting useless land into payable land as its purpose is to enlarge the vast (400-site) caravan park. But as we frequently point out not everything should be judged by money values and this lagoon is one that would, could and should have part of it declared either a nature reserve or a bird sanctuary. Kleinmond is a fast developing resort so that now is obviously the time to create such a reserve...before land shortage, demand for lake frontage and rising prices render it more difficult. It is increasingly obvious that the Western Cape is far more important for migrant waders than many of us realised and suitable feeding and resting waters are vanishing daily. The whole coast between Pringle Bay and Kleinmond is in the hands of property developers... with a few small exceptions, so that the preservation of Kleinmond lagoon may be of great importance. Has the Kleinmond Municipality the vision and will to act in this matter? Has it?

THE SLIDE SHOW

In NEWSLETTER No. 120 it was reported that the Club's finances were augmented by about R350...it was even better than that and we have been able to add R383 to the Conservation Fund. It was decided at the February meeting that the next such show would not take place until 1977 when Cape Town intends to hold a Festival.

AN APPEAL

Sam Butler, one of the oldest members of the Club...meaning his membership is old...is unable to come to outings as the result of a stroke, but would dearly like to do so. He has asked whether anyone would care to offer him transport? He is at 45 Bay View Hotel, Muizenberg. There is apparently no telephone; but, if anyone in that district would drop him a line, he would contact him.

A WELCOME LETTER

The Department of Nature Conservation of the Provincial Administration of the Cape wrote in January to organisations with an interest in conservation, among which was this Club, asking for more contact between its staff and the public. This is a step that cannot be too warmly encouraged, not only because there should be unity in the ranks of all who are working to keep what we are so rapidly losing, but because there is always a suspicion lurking in the background that official departments go their own way what is sometimes summed up in the word "regardless". That this is not in any way true is well-known to those who have had any contacts with that Department, but this new invitation is one that could, and certainly should, lead to a much closer relationship between what in financial circles is called "the public and the private sector".

This letter emphasises the valuable help that can be given to the Department by informed people, which we CBC members certainly are, by acting as watchdogs; conservation is still the Cinderella of the services and has nothing like enough money to keep an eye on the Uninformed public, of whose destructive propensities we are all aware. Reports on such negative activities as environmental degradation, illegal speedboating, illegal flower-picking, erosion, hunting, poaching, general destructiveness, fishing...etc. will be welcomed by the Department. A list of the Law Enforcement Officers in the CBC area will be found on the back page of the NEWSLETTER. Aside from this sort of essential snooping, the Department wants the opinions and feelings of more people like ourselves on how it is doing its job. What the letter calls "more feedback".

Many of us have had occasion to catch people doing things they ought not to be doing but have lacked the knowledge of to whom they should report them. The answer is now clear...to one of the Enforcement Officers whose telephone number appears on the back page.

The Cape Bird Club will certainly do everything it can to assist and co-operate with the Department of Nature Conservation and is happy to offer the use of this NEWSLETTER for anything it would like to communicate to the bird-orientated public.

SANDY BAY

The Committee at its February meeting resolved that the CBC fully support the efforts now being made to have Sandy Bay declared a Nature Reserve. A representative of the Club has been appointed to attend all meetings of the Sandy Bay Advisory Committee.

THE BROEKHUYSEN MEMORIAL

Although no information concerning the form that the planned memorial to Gerry Broekhuysen is to take has been released, members will like to know that plans are going ahead and that an announcement will be made as soon as possible.

C.B.C. RINGING ORGANISER

Dr. L. Underhill has agreed to accept the post of Ringing Organiser for the Cape Bird Club.

MARINA DA GAMA

George Begg has prepared a comprehensive report on the first year's counts and a copy is to be given to each member who has been attending regularly during 1975. This will be done at the March 14th count. Those not present at this count but who have been turning up regularly may obtain

their copy on application to the Secretary. There may be a few copies over for interested people if they apply early.

SCHOOL GROUP

It is noted with pleasure that the Ornithological Group of Bishops High School has been revived after a period of fifteen years. They had two lectures by Prof. Uys and Mr. Schmidt and will be taken round Strandfontein Sewage Farm by the latter on 14th March.

PLIFFSKIN, PLOFFSKIN, PELICAN JEE
WE THINK NO BIRDS SO HAPPY AS WE....

wrote Edward Lear. But are they?

On another page we appeal for help in the protection and conservation of these birds, to which it is hoped members will respond with the same enthusiasm as they have to the Marina da Gama appeal.

In the past members have said that "they'd like to help but don't know the birds well enough..." They can't make that excuse this time!

BIRD GARDENING

Mr. Els Greshoff, Landscape Consultant, Fairtrees Way, Durbanville (96-1601) writes "I am potting up for any interested members seedlings of HALLERIA mentioned in the last NEWSLETTER, also HOHERIA (not mentioned) which members may have for the asking, though if they do, it would be appreciated if they made a donation to the Club."

NEW MEMBERS

For various reasons the list of new members of the Club has been omitted from the last few NEWSLETTERS. Here is an up to date list. We still want many, many more....

Mr. & Mrs. C.P.S. Allen, Simonstown	J.F. Burge, Tamboerskloof
Mr. & Mrs. A. Butler, Mowbray	Dr. R. Hawke, Zeekoevlei
Mr. and Mrs. L. Hendricks, Durbanville	Mrs. M. Knox-Shaw, Elgin
P. Knox-Shaw, Plumstead	R.K. Mapp, Bellville
Mrs. B.E. Sandall, Rondebosch	Miss S. Schröder (Jun), Somerset West
C.W. Silk, Plumstead	H.M. Tucker, Claremont
P.R. Anderson, Newlands	C.J.V. Hollenbach, Tulbagh
D.D. Kaveny, Green Point	Bruce Lockhart, Newlands
N.R. McRae, Bergvliet	Stefan Smal (Jun), Somerset West
J.J.M. Benson, Hermanus	Mr. and Mrs. D.M. Egan, Tableview
Dr. & Mrs. A.W.A. Visser, Robertson	H.F. Weehuizen, Pinelands
Mr. & Mrs. E.L. Rogers, Kenilworth	Miss S.J. du Toit, Mouille Point
Mrs. G.V. Hobbs, Brackenfell	James Adams (Jun), Rosebank
J.J. Delpont, Botrivier	P. Hauptfleisch, Fish Hoek
Dr. F.E. Hofmeyr, Newlands	F.R.A. Holland, Woodstock
Mr. & Mrs. S.J. Pollard, Retreat	A. Schulman, Somerset West
D.J. Stephens, Stellenbosch	S.J. Symington, Cape Town
Mrs. M. Travers-Jackson, Rondebosch	

New Members are urged to make themselves known to Committee Members and to ask any questions, however daft. All that we want is that they enjoy what the Club offers and keep on finding out more and more about birds.

A RUDE QUESTION... You, dear reader, who we hope is enjoying this NEWSLETTER...may we ask, in a whisper...have you paid your subscription? Because if you are enjoying the newsletter, and if you like what the CBC does for both you and for birds...you really ought to, oughtn't you? There are about 100 who haven't... The Hon. Treasurer, at P.O. Box 5022, is waiting for it...don't disappoint him; after all it WAS due more than two months ago.

RARE BIRDS OF PREY

The Department of Nature Conservation in the Cape is sending a questionnaire to all farmers asking whether they have seen, or have seen nesting on their land, and when, certain species of the rarer birds of prey and whether they have instances of any damage or loss due to their presence. This questionnaire

is accompanied by a sheet of very good colour pictures of them and the information obtained should be of great importance. We shall be glad of further news of this as things get going; in the meantime members who see any of the rarer birds of prey OUTSIDE the CBC area (if inside it, and reported to us, it will of course go into the NEWSLETTER) would help by reporting to Mr. Millar at the Head Office, Union House, Queen Victoria Street, Cape Town 8001.

ANNUAL DINNER

This will be held at St. James Hotel at 7.30 p.m. for 8 on Friday, 21st May. An application form is enclosed and should be sent to Mrs. N. Davis, P.O. Box 194, Constantia 7848, enclosing a cheque payable to the Cape Bird Club for R4.25 per head.

CLUB ACTIVITIES

The first evening meeting
An excursion to Tamatie Vlei

On Friday February 27 Dr. Shaughnessy talked to us of his experiences on Macquarie Island, a remote spot whose birds are chiefly studied by Australian ornithologists...of whom Dr. Shaughnessy is one. Notable for the occurrence of four different species of Penguin, we were told about the two larger ones, the Royal and the King, as well as the Giant Petrel and some of the less spectacular birds to be seen there.

Perhaps as interesting as the birds were the pictures of the island itself and the observations on the habits of the migratory ornithologists because this is one of those places that few of us could ever visit though we often envy those who are able to escape from the overcrowded life we live. Perhaps, too, we came away thinking that things are better for us where we are!

The talk ended with some notes and pictures of the rich seal population of the island. It was a good start to the 1976 season.

The field trip to Tamatie Vlei on Saturday February 14 attracted a large number of people, and no wonder because it is one of the unique places for water birds in South Africa. Rudolf Schmidt was leader and conducted the large party to points from which many birds could be seen; his comments were exactly what many of us have wanted for a long time and provided a lot of information that many of us had not previously known.

The real highlight of this outing was the large number of Avocets (269)... this year seems to be a good year for them. We also saw both species of Flamingo, many ducks and geese, and four species of European Waders.

Marina da Gama

There have been two counts since the issue of the last NEWSLETTER, on January 12 (2699 individuals of 79 species) and February 8 (2730 birds of 77 species). This being the second year of these counts one is able to compare numbers with those of 1975 (January 2893 and February 3466) which, even allowing for all the myriad factors that affect bird numbers, does seem to tell of the damaging effect of the slow obliteration of a once-superb habitat

GOOD BIRDING PLACES

What CBC Members can do.

The present is a time when a number of departments, boards, councils etc. are making surveys and plans the object of which is to utilise the land of South Africa to its best advantage. For example, the Department of Planning and the Environment is busy classifying the land into various categories with the object of ensuring that so far as it can, for example, good agricultural land shall not be occupied by houses, and similar resource-wasting activities are not encouraged.

Here in the Cape area, the Metropolitan Planning Board is at work on a survey of the Cape Town-Paarl-Stellenbosch triangle with the same sort of work at a lower level, and most municipalities have somewhere in their files the same sort of investigation for their still smaller areas of responsibility.

This planning activity came up for discussion at a recent meeting of the SAOS Conservation Committee where it was mentioned that the ornithological world was, in general, very vague about what was needed for the preservation of suitable habitats in the country as a whole and the CBC area in particular; so much so that, if we were asked at short notice, to provide a list for any part of our area we should quite certainly be unprepared for it.

A proposal was then put to the meeting that the Cape Bird Club should make a start as soon as possible with the compilation of a list of good bird places; places that are important for birds to cover the whole area and include every type of habitat that the birds require. This was warmly approved by the Committee and the CBC complimented on its sensible suggestion.

So here is a pleasant task for all our members, and yet more than just a pleasant task, one of the utmost importance for the future of what we interest ourselves in...birds. So for a start, would any member like to offer his/her services as co-ordinator? Usually this sort of job falls to a Committee member, chiefly because Committee members know, or are expected to know, more about what bird is what...but here no such qualifications are wanted; all that IS wanted are reports on GOOD BIRDING PLACES...for what we find good for birding, undoubtedly birds find good for birds.

At this moment there are no preconceived ideas of what form these reports should take; some data are obvious and basic, as for example the name of the place, where it is, who owns it, what sort of a habitat it is, what are the principal birds seen there and roughly in what numbers; any known threats to the place should be noted...and what else? As the work progresses and reports come in, we shall see what is needed better than just now.

The Conservation sub-committee will be watching this work, because it is a thing that is needed nationally, so this is what engineers call a pilot scheme; one from which much could spring.

At the Committee Meeting held on March 1, a sub-committee was appointed and members who would like to take part in this extremely valuable work are asked to get in touch with either Mr. Arthur Gregory, 30 Pringle Road, Tygerhof, 7405 (52-3393) or Mr. Len Hicks, 13 Palmboom Road, Newlands 7700 (6-3470).

A PELICAN CENSUS

In conjunction with the SAOS Conservation Committee, the Cape Bird Club will conduct a complete census of the White Pelican (43) in the South-Western Cape. There are only two known breeding sites of the bird in South Africa, one on Dassen Island, the other at Lake St. Lucia in Natal. The South-Western Cape's population is estimated to be only in the lower hundreds; it is largely concentrated on the vleis of the Cape Flats. The presence of introduced carp in these vleis is most likely important for the birds' well-being.

There are, however, records of pelicans occurring elsewhere in the S.W. Cape and to run concurrently with the planned census, members are requested to report all sightings, giving number of birds, place and date; the emphasis here being primarily in PLACE. Observations and counts of birds overhead are also needed.

Breeding is completed on Dassen Island by early March and the brown fledglings will start appearing on the vleis. Counts of pelicans should give the total number of adults and the total number of fledglings seen... they are easily recognised by their pale brown colour and smaller size.

It is intended that all places where pelicans have been seen will be visited on the same date and any birds seen there will be counted during the same hour of the day. One observer at each place would be sufficient. The date when this will take place is Sunday 28 March, so will those willing to take part please send names, addresses and phone numbers NOW to Mr. John Cooper at the Percy FitzPatrick Institute (69-8531, Ext. 581).

John Cooper will be at the Marina da Gama count on Sunday 14 March and will by then have a list of vleis to be visited. It may be possible to make a contribution to the cost of fuel in the case of any very distant places being included. The present list totals fifteen places.

The information obtained from this census will be extremely valuable for the planning of measures to be taken to conserve this large and attractive bird. The Committee of the Cape Bird Club hopes that this exercise will be successful and it is intended that it shall be an annual event.

REPORTS AND OBSERVATIONS

1. Sightings

GOLDEN ORIOLE (519) On 28 December 1975 a Golden Oriole visited our fig trees; the first time since 1973.

B.C. VANDERBIILT DURBANVILLE

This is presumably the European Golden Oriole (519) recorded in the CBC Check List (1963) as being reported from Somerset West 1957-59 and at Klavervlei 1963.

WHITE STORK (80) On 13 December 1975 a flock of 27 observed circling over my house Ridge Acres near Somerset West. They circled for about ten minutes then headed North. This flock was also observed by Hans Kakebeeke and Haik Scholter over Somerset West. Mr. Kakebeeke told me that he saw another flock of 50 flying over Somerset West the same morning making a total of about 80.

PAT LOCKHART SOMERSET WEST

STANLEY BUSTARD (219) One seen not far from Velddrif on grassland by the road from Piketberg on 1 November 1975. It flew across the road and walked along open veld hunting for insects.

PAT LOCKHART SOMERSET WEST

WHITE-BACKED DUCK (104) In company with Alf Brown on January 8 I found at the vlei at the S.A. Coloured Corps, Faure, a pair of White-backed Duck with three young.

DR. H. GOTTSCHALK PLUMSTEAD

This is quite a find; the Check List says "Uncommon and local; probably only a straggler from further north, though it was reported breeding at Verloren Vlei in 1924."

WHITE STORK (80) On a journey eastwards the first White Storks were seen just outside Caledon, then the next just outside the CBC area on the far side of Swellendam. From here they increased in numbers as far as Heidelberg.

DOROTHY CLARKE CLAREMONT

BLACK HARRIER (169) On September 14, 1975, we saw a Black Harrier tearing at the body of a large rodent that had probably been killed by a passing vehicle on the way from Vanrhynsdorp to Nieuwoudtville just at the top of the Van Rhyns Pass. It did not leave its prey even when a large lorry passed so close that it ruffled its feathers!

H.J. DOWNING CAPE TOWN

GLOSSY IBIS (83) A pair seen at Strandfontein about 4 p.m. on Thursday February 26.

PHILIP TONGUE CAPE TOWN

BROADBILLED SANDPIPER (*Limicola falcinellus*). On January 30/31 four members of the Wader Group visited the Berg River to carry out a wader census there as part of the Summer 1975/76 wader count project. (See NEWSLETTER 119). The area turned out to be an extremely important water habitat and it also provided myself and Arthur Gregory with excellent views of the Broadbilled Sandpiper, a migrant from northern Scandinavia. At the time we were in a canoe counting a flock of several hundred waders on a sandbank in that part of the river known as "Die Plaat", upstream from Velddrif. Our canoe camouflage allowed a very close approach to the birds and the sandpiper was viewed from about ten metres, in the company of Curlew Sandpiper and Little Stint. It stood about half the height of a Curlew Sandpiper and the diagnostic features were its unusually short legs, stocky build, a thick black bill which was straight for about two-thirds of its length and then kinked downwards for the last third, striped head markings and a streaky appearance on the back and breast, unlike the markings of the Curlew Sandpiper with which it was feeding. As far as I am aware this constitutes the first sighting of the bird in the Western Cape. Three of these birds were seen and photographed in November 1973 (Bokmakierie 26 No. 3 P68, 1974).

S. PRINGLE PLUMSTEAD

(Winterbottom's Check List of the Birds of South Africa, 1969, gives ONE record only from Swakopmund in 1964 and goes on to say that the bird breeds from the Mediterranean and Red Sea to Australia. The Field Guide to Australian Birds (Peter Slater; 1970) states..! "7" Sandpiper with black patch at angle of wing: bill curves downward at tip. Streaked greyish-brown above, and white below with grey streaks on breast. Snipe-like head pattern with two light stripes above eye and dark median stripe. Black sanderling-like patch at angle of wing (not always apparent). Rump and tail with black centre and white sides. Bill black; legs and feet greenish-brown. Iris brown. Tends to be solitary secretive and nowhere common.")

EUROPEAN GOLDEN ORIOLE (519) One male at Onrust on 9.1.76. According to Roberts this species normally occurs only as far south as Uitenhage.

BLUE-CHEEKED BEE-EATER (406) One at Afdaks River mouth on 11.1.76. This bird was in excellent plumage and unmistakably identifiable. We watched it for some 45 minutes as it hawked for dragonflies and other insects from Rooikrans trees near the water's edge. The race persicus is recorded in Roberts as a migrant to Natal and the O.F.S. but there is no mention of previous records from Cape Province. On the other hand, The African Handbook (Mackworth-Præd & Grant) describes persicus as occurring throughout Southern Africa in the non-breeding season.

BOOTED EAGLE (139) One pale-phase bird hunting over woodland near Afdaks River mouth on 22.1.76. Excellent views were obtained from all angles as the bird circled overhead or made spectacular stooping attacks with extended legs at potential prey. Roberts states that this migrant species penetrates only as far south as Eastern Cape Province, but that it may be "commoner than records suggest", a contention borne out by a recent article in "Bokmakierie".

EUROPEAN ROLLER (412) One on roadside telegraph wires near Kleinmond on 21.1.76. According to Roberts, the species is of irregular occurrence west of Knysna.

(Footnote to above: The occurrence within a small area of four very unusual species in the space of 14 days strikes me as somewhat remarkable, and one wonders whether this might be connected with the abnormally wet conditions experienced in the north of the Republic during this period. It will be interesting to hear of the experiences of other observers).

OSPREY (172) One present at Bot River Lagoon at least from 19.1.76 to 18.2.76. On one occasion it was seen to make diving attacks high in the air upon a Fish Eagle.

E.L. ROBERTS HERMANUS

PURPLE GALLINULE (208) On one of the temporary vleis alongside Black River on 7 December I saw two Purple Gallinules in the reeds with two chicks I should say at least 4 weeks old. I have not seen them in this area for many years.

MISS N. WILLIAMS PINELANDS

2. Behaviour

CAPE TURTLE DOVE (316) Mrs. Rowan has forwarded us a letter from Mrs. Clarke reading as follows, together with her reply. We feel that it will be of interest to members.

"Watching a Cape Turtle Dove from my window during the winter, in cold squally weather I noticed that during the hailstorms it held its wings almost over its head as if to protect them from the hail, but when the weather changed to rain or stopped raining the wings returned to their normal position. It repeated this many times for at least 20 minutes."

Mrs. Rowan replied "it was almost certainly "rain bathing". Why they should indulge in this behaviour during such cold weather I can't think; but they do seem to be stimulated to lift their wings to let the water run amongst their body plumage by large, heavy, well-spaced drops of rain, and perhaps the hailstones had a similar effect."

(Behaviour contd.)

GREAT CRESTED GREBE (4) We were at Meerlust Farm on January 8 and again on the 15th and noticed a Great Crested Grebe's nest with 4 eggs (Roberts states 2 - 3). Although we approached slowly on three occasions not once were the eggs covered when the parent bird left the nest. But on January 20 at the same place the bird did cover the eggs before leaving.

DABCHICK (6) At the same place on January 14 we found 7 Dabchick's nests with eggs all well covered with vegetable matter before the parent left.

DR. H. GOTTSCHALK AND A. BROWN PLUMSTEAD

3. Nests and Eggs.

CAPE TURTLE DOVE (316) Miss N. Williams writes..."I refer to the March NEWSLETTER p.6. where John Cooper reports the sighting of a Laughing Dove (317) nesting on the tower in the sea near Melkbos. On 16 November 1975 a friend of mine, Mr. T. Savage, who does inspections at this tower, reported a TURTLE DOVE (316) sitting on two eggs on this tower."

LITTLE BITTERN (67) This season there have been three pairs of this bird at Rondevlei Sanctuary of which one nested successfully.

HOWARD LANGLEY RONDEVLEI

HEAVY SEABIRD MORTALITY ?

Recent beach walks along the Strandfontein coast have revealed a surprisingly large number of dead seabirds. The first walk on 21 February covered a 5 km stretch eastwards starting from Sunrise Beach car park and the dead birds comprised 4 Jackass Penguin (2) (including 2 emaciated juveniles), 3 Cape Gannet (44), 3 Cape Cormorant (48) and 2 Sooty Shearwaters (29).

The second walk, on 22 February, covered 6 km from Swartklip to Eerste River mouth at Macassar. Along this stretch the figures were more alarming: 14 Cape Cormorant, 9 Sooty Shearwaters, 4 Jackass Penguin (2 disembowelled, possibly taken by seals?), 3 Kelp (African Black-backed) Gull (287), 1 Crowned Cormorant (50) and 1 Common Tern (291). None of the birds had been oiled and the cause of death is unknown. The previous weekend (14.2.76) I visited Stilbaai with Ron Summers and on the beach near that place we found the remains of 13 Sooty Shearwaters:

Investigation of bird corpses on beaches is likely to be rewarding in view of the high proportion of ringed penguins and migrant terns and there is always a chance of finding something unusual.

Interesting finds made at Olifantsbos included a Shy Albatross (11) (18 October '75) and with John Cooper, a Sabine's Gull (289x) (17.1.76)

ALIEN VEGETATION AND BIRDS IN THE CAPE

POINT NATURE RESERVE

Although aliens, such as the various Acacia, Pinus and Eucalyptus species, are highly undesirable here in the Cape Peninsula and especially in Nature Reserves, they are in some cases made good use of by birds. In the Cape Point Nature Reserve for instance, it has been noticed that certain bird species confine their nesting and other activities, exclusively to stands of alien trees.

The most spectacular of these species is of course the Fish Eagle (149) which nests annually in either the pines or gums that grow along the Klaasjagersberg river. Another interesting raptor, recently found nesting in the pines of this area, was the Red-breasted Sparrowhawk (156). A pair of Wood Owl (362) are also quite at home in the dense mixed stands of Pine and Acacia of this area.

The four species of flycatcher occurring in the Nature Reserve, namely Fiscal (665), Dusky (655), Paradise (682) and Cape Batis (672) have, except for the last, only been found nesting in alien trees. In fact the other three species confine all their activities to stands of aliens, rarely venturing out into the indigenous bush.

ALIEN VEGETATION AND BIRDS IN THE
CAPE POINT NATURE RESERVE Contd.

The Red-eyed dove (314) and Rameron Pigeon (312), almost certainly owe their existence in the area to alien trees. The same could apply to the Pied Barbet (432), as I have yet to find these birds nesting in anything but dead Acacia trees, while Night Herons (69) have only been found roosting in gum trees in which they are also suspected of nesting.

A number of species, although making use of indigenous vegetation, appear to show a preference for alien vegetation. For example, only two of the 15 Black-shouldered Kite (130) nests that I have recorded in the Reserve were in the indigenous bush, the rest being in Pine trees.

There also appears to be a definite increase in numbers of Cape Robin (581) Boubou Shrike (709), White-eye (775) and Cape Thrush (553) in stands of alien bush as against the indigenous bush.

As to why these mentioned birds should prefer aliens is reasonably obvious. Most of them are birds of forest habitats or that require trees of some height in which to nest. The vegetation of the Reserve is naturally low in character, lacking any form of forest habitat. The introduced alien trees of the area have provided such habitats, which naturally will be populated by species not normally found in an area devoid of forests or dense bush.

It must be stressed that the above observations are not an argument in favour of alien vegetation, but are merely an attempt to show how aliens have possibly assisted in increasing the distribution of some of our birds.

HOWARD LANGLEY RONDEVLEI

STRANDFONTEIN (Aamatie Vlei)

The report by one of the editors of the sighting of a pair of Glossy Ibis (83) not to mention about 2000 Flamingoes both Greater (86) and Lesser (87) on February 26, and a count by a member of the Wader Group of about 700 Avocet (269) about 10 days earlier...estimated as possibly one-third of the total number of these birds in the Western Cape...has again emphasised the overwhelming importance of Strandfontein to conservation. With a rapid and unthinking destruction of wetlands in this part of S. Africa, and the knowledge, born of long experience, that we must look after our own interests and seek sympathetic friends in all places where they can help us, we feel that now is the time to press upon the Municipality the undoubted fact that here, at Strandfontein, they have one of the jewels in the whole of the country. That this is an area unique in South Africa is becoming more and more evident; birdwatchers and ornithologists from Europe have compared it with such world-famous reserves as the Coto Donana...and not to the Coto's advantage. In a world run by cynics and profit-makers, here, in Cape Town, we have one of the greatest reserves for water birds in existence.

The reason for this eulogy is that there are very long-term plans to eliminate these extensive pans and replace them with a more effective and less wasteful system of sewage disposal. With such a plan no-one could quarrel... but there are other things in life than economical sewage disposal and we should like to ask the City Fathers never to forget what a priceless asset they have here and to urge them with all the force of conviction and certain knowledge that here they have something that must be kept, whatever other works are constructed.

Cape Town is a wealthy city and one with a well-deserved reputation outside South Africa for reasonableness and fair dealing not always shared with the rest of the country. We citizens of Cape Town are proud of this reputation and we are sure that in the world-important business of preserving that part of our national heritage represented by birds, it will not fail us.

P R O G R A M M E

APRIL-MAY 1976

Please diarise these items.

EVENING MEETINGS

Friday April 30.

Dr. R. Summers BIRDS OF GREENLAND

Please note that the date for this meeting has been altered.
The programme for the year in NEWSLETTER 120 gives April 23.

Friday May 21.

ANNUAL DINNER. A form is enclosed with this Newsletter which must be returned to Mrs. N. Davis not later than May 18 with a payment of R4.25 for each person attending.

PLEASE NOTE that August 20 will be a Members' Evening. Please contact Stan Clarke (69 Pluto Rd. Plumstead 7800. Phone 71-2745) about your contribution to it.

FIELD EXCURSIONS

Saturday April 10. (Again note changed date from Sunday 18th)

PAARDEVLEI. Take the N .2. and turn off at the Somerset West-Strand junction and over the road bridge towards Strand. Proceed for about 1 km until you reach the roundabout. Then turn right here towards the A E & C I entrance and carry on until you see the CBC sign.

LEADER: Pat Lockhart. 2.00 p.m. Please be on time!

Sunday May 16.

VERGELEGEN. Go along the N.2. and take the Somerset West-Strand turnoff, turn left again and proceed to the traffic lights (Robots if you like!) Turn right here towards Somerset West. At the 1st set of traffic lights you come to, turn left along Lourensford Road. Continue for about 3 km until you see the CBC sign at Vergelegen entrance on the right-hand side of the road.

LEADER: Pat Lockhart. 9.30 a.m. 15 min. allowed for latecomers. Those arriving after that will have difficulty in finding the way.

NATURE CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT OF THE PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION
General Enquiries to Mr. J.C.G. Millar (Public Relations Officer)
P.O. Box 659, Cape Town 8000. Phone 45-0231.

Law Enforcement Officers in CBC Area

CAPE TOWN	E.E. van Rooyen	45-0232 (Office)	43-7833 (home)
	K. Fleming	(45-0234 (Office)	
	R.S. Bloch	(45-0234	
LAAIPEK	J. Moron	(55 (Office)	
	P.J. Williams	(55	
HERMANUS	A.P.H. Deetleefs	1-0618 (Office)	1-1015 (home)
	C. Philips	1-0618 (Office)	
CERES	E.A. Nel	914 (Office)	3113 (home)

You are asked, please, to make use of these officers when the need arises.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. Please note the Annual General Meeting will be held on June 11 and a separate Notice will be sent out to Members.