

V/L
PERCY FITZPATRICK INSTITUTE
OF AFRICAN ORNITHOLOGY.
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN,
RONDEBOSCH.
CAPE BIRD CLUB

CAP.

K A A P S E V O E L W A A R N E M E R S K L U B

P.O. BOX 5022,
CAPE TOWN.

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KAAPOSTAD.

NO. 126

JANUARY 1977 JANUARIE

EDITORIAL BOARD: Derek Longrigg Rudolf Schmidt David Steele Philip Tongue
Please address all communications to the Club's P.O. Box

NOTES AND COMMENTS

SUBSCRIPTIONS: It is gratifying to note that despite the difficult economic climate the Hon. Treasurer has received prompt payment of so many subscriptions.

In addition to this, many members have made generous donations to the Broekhuysen Memorial and the Conservation Funds. It is not possible to write to each member and express our thanks but the Club is most grateful for both the response and the generosity.

THE SLIDE SHOW: Tickets will be on sale at the evening meeting on January 21 and arrangements have been made for anyone willing to sell them to have batches of ten available. However, anyone taking a batch for sale must be prepared to account for them either in cash or cash and unsold tickets.

The date for the return of them will be announced but it is likely to be about April 12.

Admission is R1.00 with a reduction of 50c for anyone producing a Festival Membership card.

ROAD SURVEY COUNTS: We have received the following request from Prof. J.M. Winterbottom:

"Those of you who read Peter Ward's article on Road Survey Counts in the last BOKMAKIERIE may recall that counts of this type have been going on in the Club area for about five years. We now find ourselves in need of additional helpers. Anybody who knows birds and is willing to help in our March count should please contact me (phone 45-4034; address 9 Alexandra Av., Aranjzicht) and full instructions will be supplied."

THE RED DATA BOOK: Reinforcement of the request made Mr. John Cooper in Newsletter 125 comes from the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) who write: "Revision of the South African Red Data Book (Aves): The authors of the South African Red Data Book (Aves) wish to request your personal support in a continuing checking, correcting and collecting of data for the individual species sheets. It is intended to keep an open file for each species in the book. Relevant information on the status of any listed species should be sent to Mr. J. Cooper, FitzPatrick Institute, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch 7700. It is hoped that information collected in this manner will lead to a better arrangement of conservation priorities for the listed birds, and ultimately to a revised, and more authoritative, Red Data Book for South Africa. All contributions will be acknowledged."

NEW MEMBERS: The last list of new members was published in Newsletter 123 (July). Since then the following have joined and are, we hope, enjoying their membership: Dr. I. Jach, Milnerton; Mrs. K. Pearson, Constantia;

M. Eve...

M. Eve (Junior) Claremont; Capt. and Mrs. W.E.C. Perkins, Kenilworth; Miss J.E. le Roux, Mowbray; Mrs. E. Silbernagl, Durbanville; Mrs. D. Tyler, Robertson.

MARINA DA GAMA: Having been absent for so much of 1976 my files of the monthly counts here have developed unhelpful gaps so that it is not possible to give any sort of a report on the counts, but what I have been able to do is to compare the December counts for three years...for we began in December 1974. Here is a rough analysis:

	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>
Water Birds (i.e. all birds in Roberts Grebes to Terns, but excluding Gulls)	355	643	510
Gulls (all species)	757	811	588
Other (land birds)	400	359	463
Total numbers	<u>1512</u>	<u>1918</u>	<u>1694</u>
Number of species	64	67	71

This doesn't quite support the pessimists who claim that numbers have fallen over the three years, and indeed, a cursory run-through the details of species doesn't appear to show that any one species is declining at the expense of others. There is no doubt that by the end of this year some sort of trend might be discernible.

As to the increasing number of species seen, are we becoming better at it, or are those running the counts giving more credence to our identifications? Or is it just practice?

It is hoped that members will continue to support this, our first really successful team effort, especially now that the work is beginning to show up some interesting facts.

LANIARIUS: - May we again remind members that the special number of the Northern Transvaal's journal LANIARIUS devoted to wader identification may be obtained by writing to the Hon. Secretary at P.O. Box 4158, Pretoria, 0001, enclosing 50 cents. It is worth having.

STAMP COLLECTORS... Mrs. Gillian Wheeler is collecting Bird Stamps of the World and would be pleased to contact others with the same interest. Telephone her at 72-5732 any evening.

REPORTS AND OBSERVATIONS

SIGHTINGS:

WHITE-BACKED DUCK (104): On December 22 I visited the Paarl Sewage Works and at 9 o'clock I saw a group of five White-backed Duck swimming on the large pond. I watched them for about 30 minutes, then they flew off and settled on a small island, preened themselves, then tucked their beaks under their feathers. I drove round that way four hours later and they were still on the island.
- Alf Brown, Tamboerskloof.

BLACK DUCK (95): On the same day at about 10 o'clock I spotted a pair of Black Duck swimming around at the top end of the same pond. I watched them for about 15 minutes then they flew away but I could not see where they settled.
- Alf Brown.

KNYSNA SCRUB WARBLER (611): There is at least one pair of Knysna Scrub Warblers nesting in the rubbish over the river in the Cecelia Reserve. I have heard these birds singing every day since about the middle of October and seen them on many occasions. I have not found a nest, but I am sure it must be there as the birds are always in the same place.
- Miss K.E. Irish, Wynberg.

I confirm Miss Irish's observation and add that on January 3, 1977, I heard one singing in Skeleton Gorge at the Kirstenbosch end of the main path from the Gardens to the Contour through the indigenous forest.
- Philip Tongue, Wynberg.

CHAFFINCH (870): I also hear Chaffinches every day singing in the pines at the entrance to the Cecelia Reserve. - Miss K.E. Irish, Wynberg.

BLUE CRANE (216): On December 10 about 11 a.m. at Rooi Els, on the farther side of False Bay, looking towards the Cape Peninsula, in a particularly violent south-easter, Prof. Roy Siegfried saw 25 Blue Cranes (216) being blown across the sea towards the Peninsula. He watched them until they were out of sight. Presumably they had been blown by the wind from the Bredasdorp area where this species may usually be seen.

- Prof. R. Siegfried, P.F.I.A.O.

Towards the end of December Ashley Hartley was driving past the new naval radar station on the road that links the Knuzenberg Freeway with the Old Cape Road, when he noticed a large, grey looking bird high in the sky; it obviously wasn't a Stork and was too large for anything he could think of. We think that it was most probably one of the cranes reported above.

HADEDIA (84): In 1973 I wrote to you informing you of the sighting of three Hadedia at the top end of De Hoop Vlei, district Bredasdorp, near the farm Windhoek, which is part of the De Hoop Nature Reserve. I would like to qualify this with another sighting of one Hadedia next to the bridge over the river at the same place. Map Co-ordinates 34°24'29" S 20°18'44" E. Date 12.12.76. This bird flew up from the field next to the bridge as we approached in our truck and settled again a short way off to continue feeding. As far as I know this is the most southerly point from which this bird has been recorded. - Dr. M.H. Currie, Wankershoek Nature Conservation Station, 14.12.76.

A Note from Constantia: Mr. W.T. Ferguson writes (2.1.77): I have been living more or less in the middle of the Vale of Constantia for 4½ years now and offer the following observations - In the vicinity I have noted close on 60 species. Among the birds here the following are extraordinarily scarce considering the environment: Cape Wagtail (685), Cape Bulbul (543), Nightjar (373), Red-faced Mousebird (592). Absent: European Swallow (493), Sombre Bulbul (551), Fiscal Flycatcher (665), House Sparrow (784).

BEHAVIOUR:

CAPE DIKKOP (275): With reference to Mr. E.L. Roberts's interesting note on the Cape Dikkop, there is a (brief) description and a photograph of this behaviour in BOEMAKIERIE, 13, 1961, pp. 2-3, by Prof. C.J. Uys. - Prof. J.M. Winterbottom, Oranjezicht, 20.12.76.

I wish to confirm E.L. Roberts' findings re above. I noticed this similar behaviour of outstretched wings and hissing in 1974 and 1975 at the Strandfontein Sewage Works in the same area on both occasions, so I presume it may have been the same pair. They were not there this year 1976. Only one bird displayed this behaviour towards my car and also ran towards me when I alighted, with a marked hissing. There were two young birds newly hatched, on both occasions, in the long grass nearby.

- Dr. H. Colclough, Plumstead 21.12.76

The above has also been confirmed by Mrs. Elizabeth Coward who was "almost attacked" near a nest below the reservoir in Kirstenbosch Gardens last October.

COMMON SANDPIPER (258) REDWING STARLING (745): On October 17, 1976, my wife and I found three Common Sandpipers (258) together on the rocky coast at Pringle Bay, and Redwing Starlings (745) feeding among the seaweed.

- W.T. Ferguson, Constantia 2.1.77

NESTS AND EGGS:

ROCK PIGEON (311): Made its "nest" on flowerpot on stoep of flat - 4th floor. Two eggs were produced on October 20, a.m. Eggs hatched on October 30. The young were there on November 24 but had gone by November 27. This is not the first occasion a bird has settled but first for successful clutch.

- Reported to Miss E.M. Darling.

CAPE TURTLE DOVE (316): Last week I found a Cape Turtle Dove's nest with three eggs in. I looked in three bird books and they all say two eggs are laid. Has this ever been recorded? - Stephen Anderson (Junior Member)
Rondebosch. 29.11.76

We asked Mrs. M.K. Rowan (who knows a lot more about Doves and Pigeons than we do) about your nest, and she told us that there could be two explanations for there being three eggs because it is most unusual for a dove to lay more than two. But doves use the same nest several times, and sometimes, if one egg fails to hatch, she lays a second clutch alongside the old, addled one; the second possibility is that two females might have laid in the same nest ...this is a thing that does happen from time to time. Thank you for writing and we hope you will have many happy days of birding.

BROWN-HOODED KINGFISHER (402): This species is recorded in Roberts as occurring "from Swellendam eastwards..." and in the CBC Checklist as "known only from Swellendam, Bonnievale and Riviersonderend", though I and other observers have over the past year or so reported it at least as far west as Hermanus. A male has been present at Salmonsdam Nature Reserve, near Stanford, since February 22, 1976, and on November 11, 1976, my wife and I saw a female leave, then re-enter, a freshly-excavated burrow in the steep bank of a small stream. Her behaviour suggested strongly that she was nesting there, and on November 25 we watched a male visit the hole three times at 15-20 minute intervals around midday. On the last occasion he carried in a small dead snake of about 20 cm. Immediately, both Kingfishers emerged from the hole and perched on an adjacent branch with the female now holding the snake which, after a pause of about half-a-minute, she swallowed headfirst. This suggested to us that small young were being fed in the nest and that the snake was probably regarded as being unsuitable (too large?) for them. On December 24 we heard the Kingfishers calling in the large oak trees over the nest site, and after some difficulty located one fledgeling being fed by both adults high up among the dense foliage. We were unable to ascertain the full size of the brood, though we feel certain that there was more than one fledgeling. - E.L. Roberts, Hermanus.

MIGRATION:

Perhaps the following arrival dates may be of interest.

GREATER STRIPED SWALLOW (502)	September 10, 1976, and regularly thereafter.
RED-CHESTED CUCKOO (343)	September 21, 1976.
KLAAS'S CUCKOO (351)	September 22, 1976.
DIEDRIC CUCKOO (352)	October 8, 1976, and regularly thereafter.

The Diedric seems undoubtedly to be becoming commoner in the Cape Peninsula.
- W.T. Ferguson, Constantia. 2.1.77

CLUB ACTIVITIES

On the Paarl Sewage Works excursion no less than 78 different species of birds were recorded. Among the more notable were the highest concentration of Maccos Ducks I have ever witnessed i.e. 100⁺; also large numbers of Red-billed teal, Southern Pochard and quite a few Cape Wigeon. Although inexplicably not a single Purple Heron was recorded on this occasion, 7 or 8 Night Herons were seen. A couple of Purple Gallinules, several Marsh Warblers, Eared Grebes, an immature Cape Sea Eagle and a large flock of 50⁺ Ruffs were other interesting items of what proved to be an avifauna feast! A fleeting glimpse of a Malachite Kingfisher, a flock of 20 graceful Avocets, Little Stints, Curlew Sandpipers, Marsh Sandpipers, Greenshanks and even a female Paradise Flycatcher completed the more outstanding sightings.

- Pat Lockhart, Somerset West 21.11.76

CURRENT PROJECTS

The attention of all members is drawn to the following enquiries for all of which the active assistance of anyone interested is invited.

1. Field Cards: This enquiry is of great assistance in the study of the present and past distribution of the birds of the CBC area and is the basis of any future check list or guide to Western Cape birds. Information about its general nature was printed in Newsletter 124 (September '76) and anyone willing to complete Field Cards should apply to Dr. J.M. Winterbottom at 9 Alexandra Avenue, Oranjezicht (45-4034).
2. Nest Record Cards: We cannot have too many of these, even for the commonest birds. Contact Mr. G.D. Underhill at 12 Roseberry Avenue, Mowbray (65-5698).
3. Hartlaubs Gull Enquiry: This was fully reported on in Newsletter 122 (May '76). Those interested please contact either Mr. G.D. Underhill or Les Underhill as above.
4. The Seabird Group: This new project which has exciting possibilities was first publicised in Newsletter 123 (July '76) its convener being Mr John Cooper, c/o Percy Fitzpatrick Institute of African Ornithology, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch (69-8531).
5. The Red Data Book Enquiry (Newsletter 125 (November '76): This is a project to which every member may contribute by reporting SIGHTINGS of any of the birds listed and especially of PELICANS and CASPIAN TERNS. Not just for a few weeks but for months and years. Locality, numbers, date, weather conditions and what they were doing when seen.
6. Although not a CBC project members are reminded of the Department of Nature Conservation's researches into 12 selected Birds of Prey in the Cape Province (Newsletter 122 - May '76). Information from and to the Department at Private Bag 5014 Stellenbosch (7601).
7. Road Counts: Anyone willing to assist Prof. Winterbottom in this survey (see his letter in NOTES AND COMMENTS) please phone him at 45-4034.

And, finally, the NEWSLETTER is yours (you pay for it!) in which to express your views, write about your birding experiences, send reports...complain...or better still, praise...but please do send us material for publication.

1977. P R O G R A M M E

Continuing the policy instituted last year, the events for the following two months will be published in the preceding Newsletter. However, although details are not firm, dates are, and so will you please enter the following in your diaries.

EVENING MEETINGS, in the Zoology Theatre, University of Cape Town, at 8.15 p.m. All dates are Fridays.

Jan. 21	Feb. 25	March 25
April 22	May 27	June AGM - Date to be announced
Aug. 26	Sep. 23	Oct. 23
Nov. 25		

FIELD EXCURSIONS. All dates are Sundays unless Saturday is shown.

Feb. 20	March 19/20	April 17
May 22	June 19	Aug. 21
Sep. 18	Oct. 23	Nov. 19 (Saturday)

COUNTS AT SANDVLEI (Marina da Gama). Every SECOND Sunday.

Next count February 13. Meet 9 a.m. at the Visitors' Centre.

We have tried, as far as possible to avoid the second and fourth Sundays of each month for Field Excursions so as not to coincide with our own Marina da Gama counts and the Natural History Club's activities.

During the year we shall try to show to members two of the more rare of our resident species, the Chestnut-banded Plover (236) and the Rockjumper (540).

EVENING MEETINGS JANUARY-FEBRUARY:

Friday January 21. Two films have been promised
(a) Winged aristocrats of Europe
(b) The Private Life of the Grebe

Friday February 25. Mr. Nico Myburgh

FROM THE CAPE TO THE KALAHARI GEMSBOK RESERVE

Mr. Myburgh's evening was arranged for October last year but was postponed because of the hazards involved in travel at that time.

THE FIRST FIELD EXCURSION will take place on Sunday February 20.

BOT RIVIER PLAAS

Take the N2 over Sir Lowry Pass and continue to the Hermanus turnoff: there take the Hermanus road. Carry on until just before the iron bridge, where you will see the CBC notice board at the farm road on the left hand side.

Allow 2 hours from town. Meet 9.45 a.m. 15 minutes for late-arrivals. LEADER; Mr. Arthur Gregory.

Those who cannot help but add up things will notice that only nine field excursions are given instead of the normal ten; we hope to arrange additional excursions during the year.