

NEWSLETTER - NUUSBRIEF

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Very soon this year's breeding season will end, and the Organiser of the Nest Record Card Scheme will be looking forward to a spate of cards. Let us not disappoint him. Mr. G.D. Underhill has taken over this task from Mr. John Martin, who had been in charge of Nest Record Cards for many years and who has usually been the most active contributor; this year he again topped the list of individual contributors. In his last report covering 1963, Mr. Martin mentioned 50 members who contributed cards. The following completed ten or more cards each: Messrs. D. & E. Ashforth 95, Dr. Broekhuysen 32, Mr. A. Brown 10, Mrs. M. Knipe 13, Mr. G. Lestranger 46, Mr. Jack MacLeod 71, Mrs. Martin 49, Mr. R. Martin 83, Mr. J. Martin 120, Mr. Moore 15, Mr. Morris 43, Miss C. Robinson 12, Mrs. Rowan 13, Mr. Rowlands 11, Mrs. Sawkins 16, Mr. Schmidt 115, Mr. Underhill 17, Prof. Wys 85, Mr. Wildon 18, Prof. Winterbottom 15, Rondevlei Bird Sanctuary 136 and Mr. D. Skead 71.

27 Members filled in less than ten cards each. They could easily increase their contributions. May I ask all members to read again Professor Winterbottom's appeal in Newsletter 68, October 1962, in which he states:

"Common species are even more important than rare ones, because it is only for them that we can hope to get enough Nest Record Cards to solve some of our most interesting problems". May I also draw the attention of our members to the report on the Nest Record Card Scheme in "The Ostrich", March 1964.

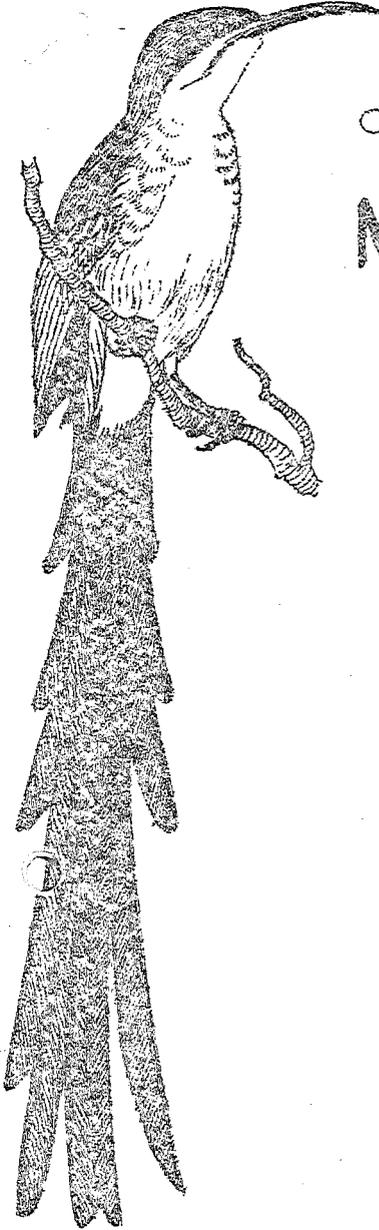
European House Sparrows at Darling

On 22nd October, European House Sparrows were seen at Darling By Prof. Winterbottom. It is most interesting that Mrs. Rowan stopped in Darling with Mr. & Mrs. R. Moreau in August, but saw no sign of them then.

Mr. David Skead who left the Cape Bird Club Area, sent me a few notes just before he departed for Bloemhof:

Cape Cormorants Nesting

On 15 October, 1964, I noted 61 Cape Cormorants sitting on nests, built on the west facing ledges of Cape Maclear in the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve. This is of particular interest as this species has not been previously breeding in the Peninsula area. Our Check List records them as breeding on the islands in Saldanha Bay.



Yellowbill Duck flying over the sea

Earlier this year while walking along the beach at Olifantsbos, I happened to note a flock of birds flying down the coast towards me. My first reaction was that "The Trek Duikers are flying unusually high today", and I momentarily paid no more attention. On second thoughts I could not recall when I had ever seen Trek Duikers flying high over the sea, so I put my binoculars onto them.

The Trek Duikers turned out to be a flock of 29 Yellowbill Duck. Realizing that it was unusual to see Yellowbills flying over the sea, I watched them more closely. The birds flew past me, then came in and circled over the bay and split into two flocks. One flock remained at the same height and disappeared down the coast. The remaining flock of 14 came right down to sea level and also flew off down the coast, but just skimming the waves in the same manner as Trek Duikers do.

The question arises: How often do Yellowbills fly over the sea and how often do we miss them by merely dismissing them as common Trek Duikers? It may be worth our while to keep a sharper lookout.

Wattled Starlings in the Cape Peninsula

On 8 May 1964 I noted a flock of about 60 Wattled Starlings in the company of a larger flock of European Starlings at Olifantsbos. This appears to be the second record of this species for the Peninsula. I noted a singleton in 1962, also in the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve.

Professor Uys reported the following observations:

The House Sparrow is now in Bredasdorp too. When passing through the town on 9 August, I noticed a male House Sparrow feeding on some scraps in the main street. Later I also saw House Sparrows at Napier.

Eclipse Records of Geese and Duck

* Mr. Jack MacLeod and I have noticed some rather unusual eclipse records in geese and duck. On 2 August we travelled along De Hoop Vlei in a boat and were surprised to find quite large numbers of Egyptian Geese in eclipse. These birds were quite incapable of flight and were flapping around in front of the boat - some eluding us by diving for prolonged periods and others by taking to the shore and disappearing among the bushes. More surprising still is that we found two Yellowbill Duck in eclipse on 22 August also on De Hoop Vlei. Both these species are known to breed in August in our area and to find some individuals in eclipse seems rather anomalous.

Additions to Cape Bird Club Check List

Professor Winterbottom writes:

On 25 June my wife and I went via Rawsonville, Brand Vlei and Doornrivier to Robertson. One section of the road

on the Worcester - Robertson border had been newly made by putting a grader through the natural veld and is not to be recommended for cars with low clearance - or to speed fiends.

One result of the trip was to add five species to the Cape Bird Club Districts Lists, three for Worcester and two for Robertson. The Worcester birds were the Black Crake (near Rawsonville), the Titbabbler and the Grey Tit, the last two in the karoo country around Doornrivier. All these species are already known from the District as a whole, but not from south of the Breede River. The same applies to one of the Robertson birds, the Chanting Goshawk. The other, however, the Pale-winged Starling, is new for Robertson and has previously been recorded from the Cape Bird Club Area only in Clanwilliam. There can, I think, be little doubt that these birds (we saw two together) had been driven down from the mountains farther north by the weather, for the peaks of the whole Langeberg were snow-covered.

On 13 October, 1964, Mr. Underhill, my wife and I found a Whale-bird or Prion in the last stages of exhaustion, and with a large cyst on the right wing, near the seaward gate of the Strandfontein - Muizenberg sewage area. It proved to be an example of Pachyptila desolata, the Dove Prion, whose nearest breeding ground is Kerguelen. According to our Check List this species has not been recorded from the Peninsula area before.

Red-eyed Dove Records

In reply to Mrs. Rowan's appeal to watch the doves (cf. Newsletter 74 of May, 1964) Miss Clare Robinson sent some very interesting records. She has recorded the Red-eyed Dove at Timour Hall Road, Plumstead, off and on for many years, the earliest written record is from 1949. A table of monthly records for the years 1955 to 1963 shows that it has been recorded for every month of the year; in 1962 and '63 it was recorded for each month of these two years. In 1964 she has also recorded it for each month up to September.

Her sister found the Red-eyed Doves very erratic at Kraaifontein which is not far from Stellenbosch as the crow flies, and there was a time when she never heard them at the farm at all.

Spoonbills near Cape Town

A number of Spoonbills were recently observed at various places in the vicinity of Cape Town. Mr. Morris first reported a flock of seven which he frequently saw at a permanent pan in Wetton Road, Philippi in the second half of April. On 26 July Mr. Mackenzie watched 3 Spoonbills at Rietvlei. On 15 August I saw 3 at a vlei off Strandfontein Road. On 3 October I saw 4 and on 17 October 9 Spoonbills feeding in the shallow water of Jacobs Vlei, Philippi; they were together with 4 Sacred Ibis and eventually these 13 birds flew off together.

On 10 October Mr. Clarke observed a Bar-tailed Godwit at the Zeekoevlei Outlet, which is at present a very good spot for watching waders.

In the beginning of May 1964 I was given a ring, C 1003, which had been taken from a dead heron at Jacobs Vlei, Philippi.

Dr. Broekhuysen informed me that this ring had been put on a large nestling Grey Heron by him and Messrs. P. Steyn and P. Zoutendyk at Rondevlei on 18 September, 1951. This bird reached an age of nearly 13 years. The ring was still in perfect condition.

Feeding Behaviour of Gulls

Mr. Underhill reports:

On 4 September, 1964, at 6 p.m. there were several Hartlaub's Gulls standing in the shallows in the bed of the Black River, near the sewerage pumping station, Mowbray. Two seemed to be feeding - repeatedly pecking at a few square inches of the surface of the water. A look through binoculars showed one bird stirring up the mud by soldierly "marking time". It did this vigorously at intervals for several seconds at a time.

How many birds do you know?

Mr. Philip Tongue made an interesting suggestion; he writes

I read a short time ago on the death of a Dutch ornithologist that his proud boast was that he had seen and identified over a thousand different species of birds. This sent me to the various lists I keep when I am in different countries and, rather to my surprise, I found that my own total (with some assistance from the experts in the Cape Bird Club) was just over 400. It then occurred to me, that since there is a little of the competitive spirit in all of us, that other members of the Cape Bird Club might like to use the Newsletter to compare their "Life-Lists" with those of other members. Perhaps it is unnecessary to add that in compiling one's lifelist, one has to be completely honest and to exclude everything not positively identified. The brown bird that just disappeared round the corner but which might have been a Double-breasted Gozzle-wozzle must, in all cases, be regretfully excluded.

On 22 September 1964, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Sawkins were asked by Mrs. Anderson, of Mowbray, to accompany her to a nest-site of a Treble Banded Plover (Charadrius tricollarius), containing four eggs. They write:

We were surprised at the number, as we understand that seldom have more than three eggs been laid by this species. We immediately thought of the possibility of two females sharing the same nest, but after two long watching periods we only saw two birds, presumably the pair.

The nest was discovered by George Anderson and his sister, Jessie, was able to take a very clear photograph of the nest and four eggs. It would be interesting to know whether any members have come across this phenomenon before.

We are aware that in Europe the Plovers lay up to four eggs, but have never known of it before in this country from a single female of that species.

A message from the Ringing Organiser

Dr. G. MacLachlan, the Hon. Organiser of Ringing, writes:

At a recent South African Ornithological Society Council Meeting which I attended as Ringing Organiser, it was suggested that many members were not keeping retrapping data because the Ringing Organiser did not require it. This is true because of the vast amount of additional data which would become available and which would be too much for the Ringing Organiser to cope with.

However, this must not be construed as an indication that retrapping data are not valuable and Council suggested that I draw all branches attention to the extremely valuable data to be gained from retrapping records.

I would therefore draw all members attention to this and encourage them as much as possible to record such data but keep them in their own records. It does not matter of course if ringing records forwarded to the Organiser have recapture data on them, but such data cannot be dealt with by the Organiser.

Hartlaub's Gull nesting at Rietvlei

In September Mr. Morgan found a nest of a Hartlaub's Gull containing 2 eggs at Rietvlei. This appears to be the first record of this gull breeding on the mainland; it breeds in numbers on Robbeneiland.

Professor Winterbottom further reports:

In Newsletter 73, I gave an example of our "Species by Districts by months" record scheme. We use 17 Districts, so the maximum theoretical score for any bird is $17 \times 12 = 204$. In practise, however, there are 15 District - months for which we have no records at all, so the maximum practical score is 189. On this basis, the most regular and widespread species in the South West Cape Are:

Fiscal 183	Cape Robin 159
Mossie 182	Cape Bunting 154
Cape Turtle Dove 180	Cape Bulbul 152
Cape Wagtail 169	Stone Chat 152
Laughing Dove 165	Karoo Prinia 149
Cattle Egret 162	Karoo Robin 148
Bokmakierie 160	European Starling 147
Pied Starling 160	Yellow Bishop 142
Cape Weaver 160	Cape White Eye 140

The Black-shoulder Kite (139) is next. Of the migrants, only the Larger Striped and White-throated Swallows (111 and 101 respectively) exceed 100.