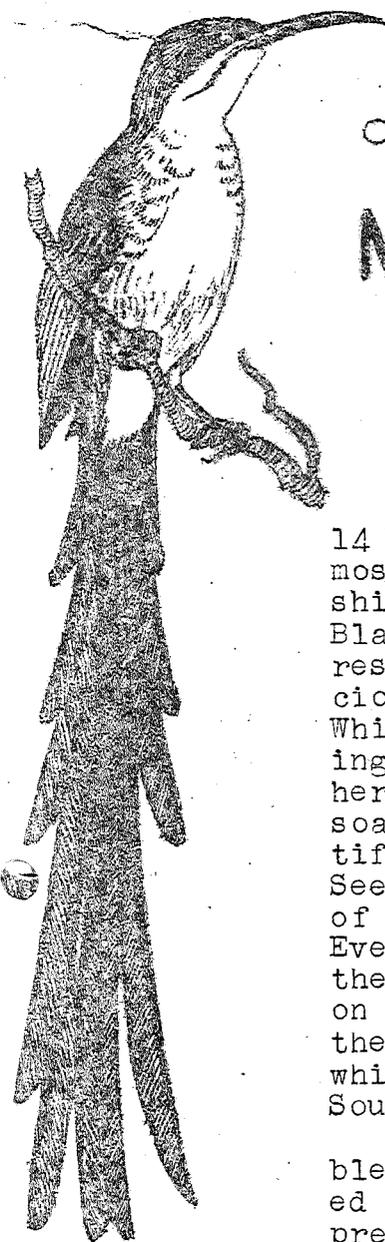


July 1967 Julie



The Club Outing to Viljoens Pass near Elgin on 14 May was a great success. In spite of the fact that most of us left Cape Town in light rain, the sun was shining at our venue. Special thanks are due to Mr. Blackburn, the owner of the farm and private flower reserve, who welcomed us with a box of "Golden Delicious" apples. The birds also played their part. While we were following the path up the slope, admiring the beautiful proteas, a magnificent Black Eagle, heralded by the screeching of some Guinea Fowl; came soaring along just above us. Cape Siskins were plentiful. The highlight of the day was a White-winged Seed-eater conjured up by Mr. John Martin in a clump of Protea bushes right next to our picnic site. Even after most of the members had gathered around these bushes, the bird remained undisturbed and went on feeding on Protea seeds. For many of us it was the first time they ever saw this rare seed-eater which has the most restricted distribution of all our South Western Cape birds.

The two white bars on the wing were clearly visible at a distance of 4 to 6 yards from which we watched the bird for several minutes. It even did some preening which showed that it lacks the greenish rump of the common White-throated Seed-eater.

FISCAL SHRIKE KNOCKED OUT BY SUGARBIRD?

Professor Broekhuysen reports: It is only too well known that the Fiscal shrike does attack other birds and takes nestlings out of nests. No wonder that the species has a bad reputation among other birds and is often mobbed and threatened and causes great alarm when it intrudes the territory of another species. This is especially pronounced when the other species has a nest.

I have, however, never heard from any birdwatcher that he has actually observed Fiscal Shrikes being hurt by the aggressive behaviour of territory holders, and I have not seen any reference in literature either.

On June 8th, however, I probably observed such a case. I had for the past few weeks been doing experiments with Sugarbird nests containing eggs or chicks in the Helderberg Reserve near Somerset West. Frequently I had noticed how a Fiscal would occasionally perch on a bush inside the territory of especially two pairs of Sugarbirds, each of which had a nest. The Sugarbirds always showed hostile behaviour towards the Fiscal, but I never saw them actually attack. On 8 June, when I arrived to start the experiments in the morning, I heard the nearly continuous high-intensity alarm call of Sugarbirds, indicating that something was severely upsetting them. When I investigated I found at least three Sugarbirds on and around a low Protea Bush all highly aggressive towards

a Fiscal Shrike which was lying on the grass with partly spread wings, making jerky movements. When I approached, the Fiscal fluttered over the grass, but soon gave up and allowed me to pick it up. It was a female, and nothing could be seen on the outside, but the bird was obviously sick or hurt as there were these nearly continuous bouts of jerky muscle contractions.

As I did not know what had happened, I put the bird in a sheltered position on the grass away from the Sugarbirds. An hour later the bird was gone and I found it perched low in a tree. When I approached, it flew away, obviously with some difficulty.

The question I asked myself was of course what had happened to the Fiscal. My only conclusion which unfortunately is not quite certain, is that this Fiscal Shrike had come too close to the nest of one of the pairs of Sugarbirds and had been temporarily knocked out by a blow on the head delivered by one or more of the Sugarbirds. I have observed the same sort of peculiar behaviour which the Fiscal showed, in birds which had flown against a window of my house. They also recovered after a while.

I feel that this observation, although not conclusive, is worth recording.

DISTRACTION DISPLAY OF LAUGHING DOVE

In Newsletter 83, Mr. Underhill asked whether such behaviour had ever been observed in the natural habitat of the Laughing Dove. Mr. M.B. Markus from Pretoria writes to say that he has observed similar behaviour on the part of this species in Acacia thornveld at Pretoria.

SOME UNUSUAL RECORDS

On 28 January '67, Master Christopher Stuart of Plumstead saw a Rock-jumper near the Cable Station on the top of Table Mountain. According to the 1963 Check List this bird is resident in mountainous country but not in the Cape Peninsula. (This observation was made soon after the devastating fire on the slopes near Sir Lowry's Pass. Could this bird perhaps have been driven from there, seeking refuge in the Peninsula? Let us hope that a mate suffered the same fate and that they together will start populating the Peninsula.)

On 7 May, Mr. P.S. Lockhart observed two Grey-headed Gulls flying low over Klaver Vlei, Faure.

On 11 June, Mrs. Andersen saw a Jacana at Strandfontein Sewage Farm. On 24 March she saw there one Black Stork as well as 3 male and 1 female Painted Snipe, at the beginning of June a Treble-banded Sandplover was sitting there on 2 eggs.

I observed a White-fronted Sandplover sitting on 2 eggs near the Zeedoe Vlei outlet first on 19 April; on 3 and 11 May it was still sitting, but not on 13 May. It is hardly likely that these eggs hatched as the nest was only about two yards from the edge of the tarred road and the bird left the nest as soon as someone walked past. It remained sitting, however, when I stopped the car right next to it and watched it through the open window.

Junior member J.S. Pringle recorded a nest of the Black-shouldered Kite with four young at Wynberg in April; there is one previous record for April in the Check List.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 23rd OF MAY, 1967.

During the year several Committee Meetings were held with an attendance of 70 %.

On the whole, the year was rather uneventful and no vital decisions had to be taken by your committee. Of importance, however, were the following matters:

- 1) The future of the Southern Black-backed Gull colony at Swart Klip on the False Bay Shore is very much in the balance. The tarred road that has recently been built, makes it so easy to get to the colony and acts of vandalism have been reported several times. Your committee has taken this matter up and is pressing to have the colony fenced in.
- 2) The Clean Cape Association, which has as its aim to make people conscious of the beauty of the Cape and of the importance to keep beauty spots clean, has approached the committee for support. The committee has expressed its sympathy and willingness to circulate membership forms of the Clean Cape Association among the Cape Bird Club members.

EXCURSIONS AND EVENING MEETINGS:

During the period under consideration, 8 excursions and 10 evening meetings were held. As usual, these events were all very well attended.

May I take this opportunity to point out that excursions are held on private property and that, therefore, permission has to be obtained from the owner of the land. Although this permission is usually willingly given to the Cape Bird Club, some property owners have complained of vandalism by members of other societies on previous occasions. Will Cape Bird Club members attending and enjoying excursions refrain from collecting and picking of flowers or animals, as this gives the Club a bad name.

MEMBERSHIP:

The membership now stands at 320, which is a net increase of 30 for this year. My suggestion, expressed in last year's Chairman's Report, that we should pass the 300 mark, has thus become true. Let us continue with the good work!

SUB-COMMITTEES AND SCHEME ORGANISERS:

Once more, the Club owes special thanks to the "tea-makers", who did their job very well indeed. They were Miss H. Troughton, Miss K. Irish and Miss D. Clark. We are extremely grateful to these good ladies.

We are also grateful to Mrs. J. Sawkins for so efficiently arranging permits for the different excursions and for organising the annual dinner at the St. James Hotel.

During my three months absence from Cape Town, while on overseas leave, the Vice Chairman, Mr. R. Schmidt has acted as chairman. He did this in his usual efficient way, and I personally regret that I have been unsuccessful in persuading him to change places with me for the whole year. I like to record my sincere thanks to him for taking over my duties while I was away.

And I think a special vote of thanks is due to our Hon. Secretary, Mr. K. Morgan for his enthusiasm in carrying out his duties during the year.

Mr. Schmidt again edited the News Sheet, of which three issues appeared. Mr. John Perry continued to look after the Club's Slide Collection.

Professor J.M. Winterbottom was again in charge of the Bird Field Card Scheme and Mr. G. Underhill looked after the Nest Record Card Scheme.

G.J. Broekhuysen was the distributor of rings and was responsible for the filing of the Ringing Forms sent in by the different bird-banders. He also collected information from members on arrival and departure of migratory birds.

In ending this report I wish to thank my fellow-committee members for their enthusiasm.

Mr. Stan Clarke, after having been the Honorary Treasurer for many years, has decided not to seek re-election. On behalf of all the members of the Cape Bird Club a very big "Thank you, Stan" for all he has done for the Club while he was in office.

Further I wish to record the Club's gratitude to the Head of the Department of Zoology, Professor John Day, for allowing the Club to use the Lecture Hall again this year. At the same time I thank Professor Jack Winterbottom, Director of the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, for giving us the use of the Library of the Institute for our tea after the meetings.

G. J. Broekhuysen,
Chairman.

Mr. G.D. Underhill, who looks after the Nest Record Cards, submitted a very detailed and interesting report.

NEST RECORD CARD PROJECT: 1966 REPORT

During 1966, 1385 nest record cards (including 10 colonial cards) were submitted by Club members - 78 more than the total in 1965. The majority of the cards referred to the following species. Against each are shown the numbers of cards submitted during 1964, 1965 and 1966, in that order.

Dabchick	2	11	3	Stonechat	7	5	9
Egyptian Goose	12	11	15	Cape Robin	36	50	32
Yellow-billed Duck	12	17	29	Grassbird	1	7	9
Cape Wigeon	4	6	14	Fan-tailed Cisticola	8	30	18
Cape Shoveller	28	30	61	Levaillant's "	33	42	38
Guineafowl	3	9	11	Karoo Prinia	35	74	44
Cape Dikkop	9	16	14	W-throated Swallow	9	9	8
Red-knobbed Coot	81	48	96	Lgr.Strip.Swallow	6	10	16
Bl.-winged Stilt	17	15	43	Fiscal Shrike	9	28	26
W-fronted S.plover	29	47	45	Bokmakierie	9	13	13
Kittlitz's "	6	16	19	Eur. Starling	13	19	9
Crowned Plover	11	37	34	Cape White-eye	10	17	14
Blacksmith "	4	15	23	O-breasted Sunbird	9	11	11
Ethiopian Snipe	10	6	10	Lesser D.-C.Sunbird	21	26	30
C. Turtle Dove	70	91	93	Sugarbird	15	15	28
Laughing "	46	86	58	Cape Weaver	2	15	15
Red-capped Lark	4	14	3	Red Bishop	10	23	27
Cape Wagtail	19	22	20	Cape Bishop	3	18	8
Tawny Pipit	32	24	32	Common Waxbill	4	16	9
Cape Longclaw	2	8	12	Cape Sparrow	51	67	112
Cape Bulbul	13	10	5	Cape Canary	2	13	10
Paradise Flycatcher	4	8	8	Cape Bunting	2	4	1
Olive Thrush	3	5	7	Gray-b. Cisticola	3	7	11

As the nests of most of these species are easily found, we should, with little effort, double the numbers of cards this year. Of greatest value of course, is a record of the full breeding cycle from nest-building to the fledging of the young but if this ideal cannot be attained do not, on that account fail to fill in a card. Record details of all nests even if only one or two visits are made.

There is no record of the following species having nested in the Western Cape during the year under review: White-breasted and Cape Cormorant, Purple Heron, Hamerkop, Marsh Harrier, Namaqua Dove, all the Cuckoos, Pied Kingfisher, Cape Batis, Crombec, African Sand Martin; neither have the following, according to the record cards, nested in our area during the past three years: Fish Eagle, African Quail, Red-faced Coly, Tit-babbler, Pied Crow, Cape Raven, Clapper Lark, Long-billed Lark, Rufous Rock-jumper, not to mention species with restricted ranges such as the Ant-eating Chat and the Black Harrier.

Nesting by several species not usually recorded was noted last year. Mr. Lockhart submitted six cards for the Darter (there were no cards for this species during the previous two years) and also one for the Ground Woodpecker. The latter nested in the Helderberg Nature Reserve where the same member found two nests of the White-winged Seed-eater. Mr. Lockhart also submitted five of the six cards received referring to the Cape Francolin. Ten nests of the Red-eyed Dove were recorded - nine of them by Mr. David Blaker during his stay at Paarl.

To Mr. Nico Myburgh goes the credit for the first card ever received for the Cape Rail. The nest was found with a clutch of four eggs in August at Klawervlei. Mr. Robert Martin recorded a Sombre Bulbul nesting at Swellendam. There were no cards during 1964 and 1965 for this species. Another unusual record was that of the Fairy Flycatcher at Robertson, submitted by Mr. Jack MacLeod. Only one card for the Karoo Chat nesting in the South Western Cape is at present in the files of the Institute. Mr. John Martin's contribution of two cards for this species is therefore most welcome. No cards were received during the past two years for the Cloud Cisticola but this year Prof. Winterbottom recorded three nests. Mr. Schmidt in his usual thorough manner, kept watch on the Larger Striped Swallow and the White-rumped Swift and handed in thirteen cards for the former and twenty-two for the latter.

During October Messrs. A.R. Brown and J. MacLeod found the Rufous-cheeked Nightjar nesting at Melkkamer in the Bredasdorp District. No previous record for this species exists. In fact, the bird does not appear in the Check List of Birds of the South Western Cape, 1963. The identification was confirmed by Prof. Uys.

Special mention must be made of the outstanding contributions of junior members J.S. Pringle and D.S. Carver. They were active throughout the nesting season.

Cards have so far been received from only forty-one members. In the past there have been many more contributors so perhaps more cards may still be outstanding. The following members contributed ten or more cards: Messrs. R.I.G. Attwell (20), D. Blaker (34), A.R. Brown (36), D.S. Carver (84), E.R. Johannessen (24), G. Lipp (34), P.S. Lockhart (87), Mrs. E. Martin (91), Messrs. J. Martin (104), R. Martin (53), A. Morris (28), E. Middlemiss (70), J.S. Pringle (230), R.K. Schmidt (143), W.R. Siegfried (27), G.D. Underhill (328), Prof. J.M. Winterbottom (50) and Miss Nora Williams (20).

These cards will now be added to the main collection, housed in the Percy FitzPatrick Institute. Thank you all for your contributions towards the success of the project.
