

# NEWSLETTER

# NUUSBRIEF

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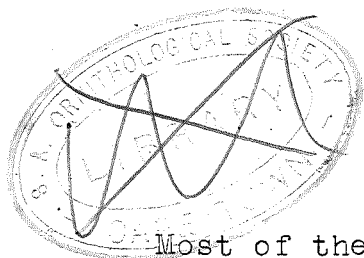
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Most of the European migrants have left us. It is a pity that only a very small number of them carry rings which might shed some light on their destinations if they are recovered overseas. Some interesting news may come from the Steppe Buzzards of which Prof. Broekhuysen and Mr. Siegfried have ringed quite a few in the south-western Cape during the last summer.

Mr. Jack MacLeod gives a very interesting report about the Somerset West ringing group:

Last season at Melkkamer, Bredasdorp, we netted 1376 European Swallows of which 4 were British-ringed birds. We later had advice of two recoveries in Russia and one in Wales and we recovered two birds we had ringed last year, so that only 5 of 1376 birds ringed there have been recovered.

Unfortunately this year the water in the De Hoop Vlei is no longer so salty, so the birds do not bathe and drink at the small fresh-water reservoir where we made good catches last year. Our present season's catch was only 568 birds of which two were British-ringed and two were our own birds from the previous year. This was a great disappointment as we were hoping to recover at least some of the many birds ringed at Somerset West.

Our main object is to trace the migratory routes of *Hirundo rustica* in South Africa, but so far, after five years, our only worthwhile recovery is a bird found four miles north of Humansdorp in the Eastern Province.

At Aldermans Vlei near Somerset West we have had the best season since we started ringing five years ago. The total caught was 2220 of which 34 birds carried rings. Here is an analysis of these:

1963/4	1 (ringed 3 yrs 341 days before)
65/6	4
66/7	1
67/8	19
Athlone	4 (A.R. Brown)
Philippi	1 (R.K. Schmidt)
Overseas	4 (3 Britain, 1 Poland)
	<u>34</u>

One of our birds, ringed at Alderman's Vlei, on Dec. 29, 1965, was trapped and released at Rondevlei on 14 Jan. 1968, and Mr. Brown caught five of our birds at Athlone.

Mr. Nico Myburgh is now our only catcher. He caught 201 swallows on 25 Jan., a further 306 on 28 and on 30 Jan. he totalled 281. In all he caught nearly 1100 swallows in five visits to the vlei. When it is realised that each bird

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is caught separately in a small hand net, this is a fantastic performance.

Recently I received a report about the ringing of European swallows at Rosherville Dam, Johannesburg, and Vrischgewaard, Pretoria, during the summer of 1966/67; this was compiled by Mr. A.D.S. Hewitt, Witwatersrand Bird Club.

At these two centres 13,417 swallows were ringed from 22 Oct. to 22 April; 110 birds were caught which had been ringed previously, 96 of them had been ringed at these centres or at Kempton Park and Bryanston, whereas 14 had been ringed overseas, 12 in Britain, one in Sweden and one in Finland.

Of 73 swallows ringed at these centres before the summer 1966/7 and recovered in Europe, 43 were found in Russia, 13 in England, 4 in Denmark, 3 in Germany, 2 each in Poland and Sweden, and one each in Belgium, Finland, Holland, Norway, Spain and Yugoslavia.

The northernmost recovery came from the Arkhangelsk Region (62-43 N, 40-17 E) near the White Sea. One swallow ringed at Vrischgewaard on 15 April 1967 was killed by traffic on 24 May '67 (39 days later) at Blaby near Leicester, England (52-35 N, 1-09 W). I wonder whether this swallow holds the speed record to Europe or the one that flew from Faure (ringed 2 March '64) to Georgia USSR (42-15 N, 42-43 E) in 34 days (recovered on 5 April '64). Another interesting recovery is a swallow ringed at Vrischgewaard on 8 April '67 and caught at Tororo in Uganda on 15 May, 1967.

#### JACANAS AT PAARL

#### BLACK-NECKED GREBE AT STRANDFONTEIN

Prof. Broekhuysen comments on these two items in Newsletter 86:

I like to report that it was Mrs. S.B. Latimer of Rondebosch who mentioned that she had seen Jacana chicks in January 1967 at "Wateruin, jiesvlei" near the Paarl Golf Club on the road to Du Toits Kloof Pass. On 10 November '67 Mrs. Latimer reported to me that the Jacanas at Wateruintjiesvlei had a nest. When I went to have a look, I saw the Jacanas but not the nest. Mr. J. Martin, however, saw a bird which was obviously sitting on a nest. We do not know what has happened since. No chicks were seen and one can only presume that the nesting attempt was unsuccessful.

The Black-necked Grebe colony at Strandfontein Sewage farm was kept under observation by Peter Frost and myself. A considerable number of nests were eventually occupied and several hundreds of eggs laid, but on the whole the birds met with very little breeding success. Only some chicks hatched. There were heavy casualties among the eggs owing to very strong wind breaking nests, extreme changes in water level because of the opening of sluices and predation. A considerable number of eggs were opened by either rats or Hartlaub Gulls. We were mainly interested in finding out whether the Blacknecked Grebe covers her or his eggs when leaving the nest. A full report will appear in The Ostrich.

#### INTERESTING RECORDS FROM THE BREDASDORP AREA.

The Reverend D.M. Low, a new but experienced member reports:

At 12.45 p.m. on 14 March a Cape Vulture was seen to alight on a giant conifer right in the middle of Bredasdorp.

It stayed for about 10 minutes, all the while appearing to tear at something in its talons, or else having difficulty maintaining its balance in a 10-15 m.p.h. wind. A considerable number of onlookers did not seem to disturb it. On taking to the air again it swooped low through the streets, passing very close to shoppers. Still gliding it gained height on the wind over the dorp and after about 15 minutes it set off slowly more or less in the direction of Potberg, their local roosting and breeding site, some 30 miles away. This was apparently an adult bird which did not seem to be injured. My enquiries reveal no escape of captured vultures from Vrolijkheid or elsewhere.

I see the Check List does show Rock-jumpers as occurring in the Bredasdorp area, but I understand that there is still little evidence. I can definitely say that a party of at least eight has been resident the whole year near the top of the mountain immediately behind the town.

The Brown-hooded Kingfisher was seen by me on the farm Zeekoevlei about 10 miles due south of Bredasdorp during last spring. It was also reported from the farm Elandspad on the west bank of the Breede River. In both cases the birds were perching on fences near farm houses and allowed very close approach.

The Fork-tailed Drongo is known at De Hoop, but Bredasdorp itself is a good deal west of De Hoop. Several times I have observed one 3 miles south of Bredasdorp on the Agulhas road in a pine plantation where bee-hives are kept. On 23 March 1968 I also saw one at our town reservoir.

#### SPREAD OF EUROPEAN SPARROW.

Prof. Winterbottom reports: On 6 April, at Hout Bay beside the fishing harbour, I noted several House Sparrows. Mrs. Rowan tells me that she spent some hours in this area at the beginning of the year but did not see the species.

He further writes: On 1 April, I received a phone call from Mr. D.H.D. Moodie to say that a strange water-bird had appeared in a moribund condition on a dam on Mr. Blackburn's farm Eikenhof, near Elgin. As I was (rather unparadoxically) unable to identify the bird from Mr. Moodie's quite lucid description, Clive Elliot and I called at the farm on the 3rd. The bird was an immature Gannet and Mr. Moodie told us that the farm workers reported about 20 present. How did they get so lost?

Conversation later turned on Guinea-fowl and Mr. Moodie said that these birds, which have considerably increased in numbers, have taken to pecking apples on the trees, preferring (very wisely!) Golden Delicious. They won't touch apples on the ground. He also told us that Mr. Blackburn was shooting these birds at Eikenhof in 1900, which suggests that the establishment of these birds in the western Cape, attributed to Cecil Rhodes on Table Mountain, may have taken place considerably earlier than has hitherto been thought.

Mr. Pelteret, on a trip through the Bredasdorp district with Mr. Ferguson on 9th and 10th February, noted a few English Sparrows at Bredasdorp; he also reports that the smaller number of these birds he recorded in Saldanha Bay village just over a year ago, has now increased to at least forty.

TREE DUCK AT CONSTANTIA.

Mr. Mordaunt Milner writes: I have a very small pond about 6 by 15 ft. One morning at the beginning of February two Tree Ducks (a pair) flew off the pond and settled on the paddock rails beside it. After about five minutes they flew off up the Klaasenbosch valley in direction of the mountain.

LANNER FALCON AT THE BLACK RIVER.

Miss N. Williams writes: On the grass verge of the Black River near Maitland on 27 January, I saw a Lanner attack a "domestic" pigeon and virtually squeeze the life out of it - a most heart-rending sound - while the Lanner mate kept watch. Then both flew off wheeling round and gaining height until they were mere specks in the sky. This gave me an opportunity of inspecting the pigeon which was pierced with holes and stone dead. Shortly afterwards they scooped down to the dead bird, one standing watch while the other tucked in. After a few minutes the Lanner flew a short distance with the bird in its claws, then resumed eating. I was never quite sure whether only one bird fed as they are not easily distinguishable. From the very first moment that the Lanners caught the pigeon, all the other birds I had been watching in the vicinity, mainly about 40 Blacksmith Plovers, vanished completely, except the Hartlaub Gulls. (On 29 March 1965 I found a dead Lanner Falcon which must have been killed by a car, near the above spot. Editor).

SOMBRE BULBUL AT HOTTENTOTS HOLLAND.

Mr. Lockhart, Somerset West, reports: On 30th January, 1968, I had the very good fortune to observe and hear a Sombre Bulbul in the indigenous forest of 'Stellenbosch Kloof' Helderberg. This kloof is on the border of Erinvale and Lourensford, Somerset West. The bird was seen high up in the kloof, and I was accompanied by Mr. D. Wood, curator of the Helderberg Nature Reserve. We watched and heard the bird calling for the best part of an hour at close range and it was unmistakable. This confirms my report of Sombre Bulbul in this area (cf. Newsletter 83) and is positive proof of the existence of this species in the Hottentots Holland area.

On 15 March Mr. Lockhart had a good sighting of his first ever Baillon's Crake (R 202) at the lily dam in the Helderberg Nature Reserve. This is the first record of this species in the Reserve and seems to be the first record for Hottentots Holland as well.

SOME RARE PENINSULA RECORDS.

Mr. G.B.A. Simpson saw a Jacana in the Ronde Vlei Reserve near the fence bordering Zeekoe Vlei road on 7 Dec. '67 and near the same place a single Grey-headed Gull on 20 Dec. Concerning Chaffinches he reports that he used to hear them in the Hillwood Road area of Upper Claremont several years ago. The final "rattle" of the distinctive song seemed a trifle untrue to the British type so common overseas. Perhaps a South African accent has been acquired through successive generations of S.A. specimens. But he has not heard this bird since the new free-way across Bishops Court has been open. Mr. Simpson has a set of 78 records made by Ludwig Kock in England just after the last

war and offers them to anyone in the Club who would be interested to borrow them.

On 1 April '68 Mr. Christopher Stuart observed a single Terek Sandpiper feeding in the mud at Rondevlei in front of the public viewing platforms.

#### DEAD BIRDS AT STRANDFONTEIN SEWAGE FARM.

During the excursion to Tamatie Vlei on 10 February some members seemed to be a bit upset about some dying and some already dead birds. Mr. C. Stuart has kept records of the dead birds at the Strandfontein Sewage Farm area from January to the beginning of April 1968, during his several visits he counted altogether: Avocet 33, Cape Wigeon 29, Coot 3, Blacksmith Plover 3, Stilt 2, Hartlaubs Gull 2, White-fronted Sandplover 2, White-winged Lake Tern 2, and one each of Shelduck, Red-billed Teal, Black-backed Gull, Common Sandpiper, Yellow-billed Duck.

If one bears in mind that the Sewage Farm is not run for the benefit of the birds this number does not seem to be high for the masses of birds present there during summer. They apparently die from a disease which seems to affect some species more than others, but does not seem to harm the flamingoes at all. Inside the treatment area the birds are at least protected against human predators and many of them are finding ample food in the pans, so that we can watch birds there which we might never see so near Cape Town if there were no Sewage Farm.

#### ANNUAL BIRDLISTS.

Mr. P. Tongue wonders whether anyone besides him has kept a list of birds seen in 1967. It would be interesting to know if they have, and if so, what is their total. In the U.S.A. birding for many people is just that competitive game. And, he thinks, none the worse for that since it gets them out of doors and gives them an object.

If you want some information about keeping a list or about what your total might be in a very good year, consult Newsletters 75 to 77 (I hope you haven't thrown them away).

#### CAPE BIRD CLUB EXHIBITION AT THE GOODWOOD SHOW.

We would like to thank all those Club members who assisted in making our exhibit at the Cape Show such a success. Some gave of their time in manning the stall and others helped by lending material. In whatever way they helped, their effort was really appreciated.

Stan Clarke, John Perry, Alan Morris.

CHECK LIST AND THE RECORDS SUB-COMMITTEE

In 1960 the Club adopted the following rules for the addition of new species to the Check List

"No new Species will be officially admitted to the Check List of the Cape Bird Club unless one of the following conditions has been fulfilled:

1. A skin or a specimen is available.
2. A recognisable photograph is available.
3. A live bird is captured and identified before release by at least two independent Members (i.e. not members of the same family), one of whom must be a Member of the Records Sub-Committee.
4. A sight record based on the identification of at least three independent Members, at least one of whom must be a Member of the Records Sub-Committee.
5. A sight record based on identification by two Members of the Records Sub-Committee."

If therefore you have the good fortune to find a species new to the List please be sure to abide by the simple rules set out above.

The following Club Members have agreed to serve on the Records Sub-Committee and will be happy to help you comply with the alternates 3, 4 and 5.

THE RECORDS SUB-COMMITTEE

Prof. G.J. Broekhuysen	"Rÿswyk", Balfour Avenue, NEWLANDS.
Mr. A.A. Brown	9, Swan Lane, BERGVLIET.
Mr. S.W. Clarke	69, Pluto Road, PLUMSTEAD
Mr. W.T. Ferguson	Dept. of Education, U.C.T. RONDEBOSCH
Mr. K. Fourie	c/o Western Province Fruit Research Station, STELLENBOSCH
Mr. J.E. Hofmeyr	2, Marne Ave., NEWLANDS
Mr. J.G. MacLeod	6, Ebenezer Flats, Drama Street, SOMERSET WEST
Mr. J. Martin	23, Pinewoods St., SOMERSET WEST
Mr. H.K. Morgan	11 Arthurs Court, High Level Rd., SEA POINT.
Mr. J. Perry	14 New Way, PINELANDS
Mrs. M.K. Rowan	11 Bishops court Rd., CLAREMONT
Mr. R.K. Schmidt	Striegau, 54 Lympleigh Rd., PLUMSTEAD
Mr. W.R. Siegfried	P.O. Box 3022, STELLENBOSCH
Mrs. I. Taylor	72 Springbok Rd., THREE ANCHOR BAY
Prof. C.J. Uys	Pathology Dept., Medical School, MOWBRAY
Prof. J.M. Winterbottom	9 Alexandra Ave., ORANGEZICHT

EXTENSION OF CBC AREA

When our Check List is again revised (in about ten years time) the Club area will be extended to the East of the Clifants and Breede Rivers to include the areas between these rivers and the Cedarberg and Langeberg mountains respectively.

For purposes of Club records and study the new areas may now be included in the records you send in.

FIELD COURSE IN ORNITHOLOGY at VROLIJKHEID, ROBERTSON.

The Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology proposes to run a Field course in Ornithology at the Predator Control Research Farm, Vrolijkheid, Robertson (by kind permission of the Cape Department of Nature Conservation), from 30th September to 4th October, 1968, both dates inclusive.

The course will include practical instruction in the study of territory, nest records, ringing and census work; and the instructors will include Professor Winterbottom, Mrs. Rowan and Mr. Siegfried of the staff of the Percy FitzPatrick Institute.

Limited accommodation of the dormitory type will be available, though for those who prefer it, camping will also be possible. All students must bring their own beds, bedding, crockery and cutlery. Food will be provided. The fee for the course (including food) is R20.00.

Apply to:

The Director,  
Percy FitzPatrick Institute of  
African Ornithology,

University of Cape Town,

RONDEBOSCH, C.P.