



NEWSLETTER - NUUSBRIEF

No
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July 1968 Julie

Mr. Robert Martin from Somerset West has been digging around in his as well as his family's records and produced some interesting items:

ANT-EATING CHAT BREEDING IN THE HOTTENTOTS-HOLLAND

Early in November 1967 my mother and I saw three young Ant-eating Chats sitting at the entrance to their nest-hole, on a farm near Firgrove. On the same day we watched the parent birds carrying building material into a nest-hole about 50 yards from the first nest. In December we watched young being fed in this nest as well. Unlike the nests at Mud-River they were built into the bank of a quarry, just as a Pied Starling would nest. (On April 11, '68 Mr. Lockhart saw 4 Ant-eating Chats on Alderman's Farm near Firgrove).

QUAIL FINCHES IN THE SOUTH-WESTERN CAPE

On 4th November 1967 I watched a Quail Finch near Zeekoevlei, Hottentots Holland district, this being the first record for the area. In October 1966 I saw Quail Finches near Caledon and on several occasions recently near Malmesbury and Klipheuwel. Perhaps they are on the increase in the South-Western Cape.

LITTLE SWIFTS IN THE HOTTENTOTS-HOLLAND

Since 1965 I have been keeping records of Little Swifts in this area. I was surprised to find that they remained in Stellenbosch and Somerset West throughout the winters of '65, '66 and '67, although the Check List implies that they are migrants. It should also be of interest that my father found these birds breeding in Somerset West on the old Central Hotel in the early 1920's. When the hotel was damaged by fire in 1930 the birds left and were not recorded breeding here again until the mid-1950's. Today I know of at least seven different breeding sites and they have increased considerably in recent years. (The Little Swifts of the Colony at Plumstead are not present during winter. Editor)

SUMMER BREEDING OF ORANGE-BREADED SUNBIRDS

As most reference books give the breeding season of this sunbird as "mainly during the winter months", the following records will be of interest. On 17th January 1968 I found the nest of one of these sunbirds under construction, a week later it contained one egg. On 23rd January two nests were

found near Viljoen's Pass, one being built and the other with two eggs. The next day Jack MacLeod and I found three more, two newly started and one with eggs. These first two had eggs on 3 Feb. On 26 January my mother and I found two more ready for eggs and also one with two eggs. By the first week of February we had 14 Orange-breasted Sunbird nests altogether, most of them containing eggs.

ALWAYS ON SUNDAYS

The following report comes from Mr. Paul Kihn, Vine Cottage, Clanwilliam, who will be pleased to meet members of the Cape Bird Club coming to Clanwilliam, at his home to help him with the identification of birds.

For some time a kingfisher has been visiting our garden through which runs the cement irrigation furrow of the village. After some time I became aware of the fact that I saw the bird only on Sundays, and then the penny dropped. No water is fed into the furrow on Sundays, but here and there pools rich in aquatic life remain; and so on Sundays the kingfisher pursues his way along the furrow picking and choosing his Sunday joint.

GREY HERON TRYING TO EAT A RUBBER RING

On 9 May Mrs. Broekhuysen, at Strandfontein Disposal Works, saw a Grey Heron which had "caught" a circular red rubber band, such as is used for Ball Jars. The heron had difficulty in swallowing the ring, the greater part of it was hanging from his bill and he was trying in vain to fold it double. He would dip it in the water and would shake his bill furiously, but to no avail.

Unfortunately the observer was pressed for time and had to leave him to his struggle.

A FAIRY FLYCATCHER AT STELLENBOSCH

was seen by Mr. Siegfried on 21st June 1968.

GROUND WOODPECKER ON TABLE MOUNTAIN

In newsletter 86 Mr. Tongue reported the regular seeing of these woodpeckers at the top of the aerial ropeway over Cecilia Gorge. Now he writes: I have been up to the Back Table several times during the present winter and have not seen them there. On 29th June, however, I walked across to the top of Kasteel's Poort, and there was a pair of Ground Woodpeckers, and I am tempted to think that it is the same pair.

SOUTH AFRICAN ACCENT OF OUR CHAFFINCHES

In Newsletter 87 Mr. Simpson mentioned: The final "rattle" of the distinctive song seemed a trifle untrue to the British type so common overseas.

Mr. Tongue cites a possible explanation for this from the April issue of Animals in an article by John Sparks on "New Trends in Ethology" where it says: Peter Marler, working with White Crowned Sparrows has shown that young males must be able to hear older males singing in order to develop the characteristic song of the species. A further situation is found in the European Chaffinch, but in this species there are two periods of learning. The first occurs when the young male has just left the nest, leaving the fine details of the song to

be perfected during the following spring

This could well account for the absence of that little flourish with which the British Chaffinch ends his song, because here a young male hardly has a chance to hear other males of his species.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT '67- '68.

During the year under consideration the Committee met eight times and there was a 93 % attendance. Mr. Ken Newman who was a Committee Member had to resign as he had to go back to Johannesburg, and his place was taken by Mr. John Perry.

1. As the result of Mr. F. Sawkins' suggestion to establish a reward for amateur birdwatchers who had done exceptionally good work, the Committee appointed a Sub-Committee consisting of Messrs. F. Sawkins, W.T. Ferguson and D. Pelteret to go into the matter and report back to the Cape Bird Club Committee. The Sub-Committee drafted regulations which eventually, after having been slightly altered, were accepted by the C.B.C. Committee and these were discussed at the Annual General Meeting.
2. Thanks to the action of the Cape Bird Club in connection with the threat to the future of the Southern Black-backed Gull Colony at Swartklip, the Divisional Council of the Cape has decided to fence the Gullery in.
3. The Committee decided to give details of the Club's aims and activities and the area covered, to the South African Tourist Corporation.
4. The Cape Bird Club has become a member of the "Clean Cape Association" and "The False Bay Conservation Society". The False Bay Conservation Society gave strong support to the Cape Bird Club's efforts to get the Gullery at Standfontein fenced in.
5. Your Committee decided to give the South African Ornithological Society a grant of R40 in aid of the purchase of a new addressing machine which is very badly needed.

EXCURSIONS AND EVENING MEETINGS

12 Evening Meetings were held during the past year, of which 2 were special ones, not on the programme: a film evening by Mr. Sinclair and a talk by Dr. Harwin on birds of prey. All evening meetings were very well attended and appreciated.

10 excursions were organized and again the attendance was very good, except the excursion to the Helderberg Reserve at Somerset West, which was washed out by rain. During these excursions the attending members behaved very well and I like to express the Committee's appreciation.

MEMBERSHIP

The membership now stands at 330 which is an increase of 10 for this year. This is not a very large figure and I hope we will do better in the coming year. Let us each try to bring on one new member, and so double the membership!

SUB-COMMITTEES AND SCHEME ORGANIZERS

This year several ladies were responsible for the making of the tea during Evening Meetings. We owe them a very special thanks and we hope they will be willing to continue the good work in the coming year.

A special thanks to Mrs. Jane Sawkins for so efficiently arranging permits for the different Excursions, and to Mrs. Mariette Broekhuysen for organizing the Annual Dinner at the St. James Hotel.

I wish to thank the Vice-Chairman, Mr. Rudolf Schmidt for taking over from me a few times. He again edited the Club's Newsletter and Mrs. Broekhuysen typed the stencils.

Professor J.M. Winterbottom once more looked after the Field Card Scheme and Mr. G. Underhill, with the help of the Percy FitzPatrick Institute, looked after the Nest Record Card Scheme.

G.J. Broekhuysen was again in charge of ringing but his duties were much lighter this year, as the filing and indexing of the Ringing Forms was no longer necessary for the Whole Ornithological Society, only for Cape Bird Club Ringers. He also collected and filed information from members on the arrival and departure of migratory birds.

Mr. John Perry kept the Club's Slide Collection and produced a number of original menu cards for the Annual Dinner. These were very much appreciated by the members attending the dinner.

Finally I thank my fellow-committee members for their enthusiasm, original ideas and support.

Further I wish to record the Club's appreciation and gratefulness to the Head of the Department of Zoology, Professor John Day, for allowing the Club to use the Lecture Hall for Evening Meetings and Annual General Meeting. We also thank the Director of the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, Professor J.M. Winterbottom, for allowing us to use the Library of the Institute for our after-meeting teas.

G.J. Broekhuysen,
Chairman.

CAPE BIRD CLUB NEST RECORD CARD PROJECT

1531 Nest Record Cards, including 8 colonial cards, for the South-West Cape were submitted during 1967, 147 more than during 1966. It should be mentioned, however, that 700 cards came from 2 members. Would not the result of a statistical analysis of data taken from such a collection be biased towards these conditions prevailing in the observers' favourite nesting haunts which may not be representative of the populations as a whole? Large numbers of cards from random sources are, therefore, most desirable. This can only be achieved if every one of you, dear members, record and submit a card for every nest found. Let us concentrate, during these final years of the decade, on building up a large collection of cards for the common species. It should be emphasized, too, that this is not only a Club project for the South-West Cape. Our contribution forms but a part of the S.A.O.S. collection which covers the whole of southern Africa. Details of nests for all regions of the Republic and the neighbouring countries should be recorded. These cards may also be handed to me.

Approximately 200 breeding species of birds occur in the Club area. Last year nesting by 120 was recorded. There were 13 species to which more than 20 cards referred, viz. Cape Sparrow (310), Goot (205), Cape Turtle Dove (97),

Laughing Dove (82), Kittlitz's Plover (46), Tawny Pipit (45), Karoo Prinia (38), Stilt (33), White-fronted Plover (33), Fan-tailed Cisticola (26), Cape Robin (22), Yellow-billed Duck (21),

The outstanding contribution of the year was Mr. W.R. Siegfried's 242 cards for the Cape Sparrow nesting in the Stellenbosch area.

Junior member Neil van Zyl's contributed 100 cards - a very stout effort. There were also many instances of breeding by species not usually recorded in our area; it may be of interest to mention a few:

→ 14 nests of the Black-necked Grebe were noted at Strandfontein during November by Mr. A. Morris. 7 occupied nests of the White-breasted Cormorant at Vlotenberg in November were recorded by Professor Broekhuysen. Also, assisted by Mr. Jarvis, 528 nests of the Cape Cormorant during January at Lamberts Bay. Mr. P. S. Lockhart recorded nests of the Mute Swan, Reed Cormorant, Cattle Egret and Darter at Paardevlei, Somerset West.

Though rumours circulated about breeding by White Storks no cards were actually received during the years 1964 to 1966. Last year, however, 3 nests were recorded. One card came from the Rev. D. M. Low and two from the families Broekhuysen and Martin. I had to add one bird to my list of breeding species when Professor Winterbottom and Mr. van Zinderen Bakker found → 2 nests of the Glossy Ibis in the district of Piquetberg during November. A pair of Spurwing Geese accompanied by a raft of nine newly-hatched goslings were observed by Messrs. A.R. Brown and A. Morris. During October, on a visit to the Doorn River area of Worcester, Professor Uys, Jack MacLeod and G.D. Underhill recorded nesting by the Fairy Flycatcher (young), Rufous-eared Warbler (feeding young out of nest), and the Namaqua Sandgrouse (eggs).

Two cards for the Black Saw-wing Swallow (Tokai in December), one for the Bale-winged Starling (Clanwilliam in October) and one for the Grey-backed Finch-lark (Vanschoorsdrift in December) were received from Mr. J.S. Pringle.

Cards were received from the following: Miss P. Baily, Mr. A.E. Brown, Prof. and Mrs. Broekhuysen, Miss D.A. Clarke, Messrs. D.S. Carver, D. Finlay, W.T. Ferguson, Peter Frost, M. Jarvis, E.R. Johannesson, A.J. Keast, Mrs. G. Lipp, Mr. P.J. Lor, Mrs. M.J. Love, Messrs. P.S. Lockhart, J. MacLeod, Mr. & Mrs. J. and Mr. R. Martin, R. Mew, Martin Melck, A. Morris, N.A.H. Millard, H.K. Morgan, Mrs. Nichol, Messrs. D. Pelteret, J.S. Pringle, Mrs. M.K. Rowan, Messrs. R.K. Schmidt, W.R. Siegfried, L.G. and G.D. Underhill, Prof. C.J. Uys, Messrs. N. van Zyl, E.M. van Zinderen Bakker, M. Waltner, Prof. & Mrs. and Mr. R. Winterbottom, and Miss Norah Williams.

My sincere thanks to all these contributors towards the success of the project.

G.D. Underhill
Organizer.