



CAPE BIRD CLUB : KAAPSE VOËLWAARNEMERSKLUB

NEWSLETTER - NUUSBRIEF

PERCY FITZPATRICK INSTITUTE
OF AFRICAN ORNITHOLOGY,
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN,
BONDESBOSCH.

No

NR

94

94

July

1970

Julie

Bird life of our Islands

Professor Winterbottom writes: The birds of our offshore islands are very imperfectly known. I have recently compiled a comparative list for six of the islands - Robben, Dassen, Schapen, Vondeling, Malagas and Bird (Lambert's Bay). The penguin, the four cormorants, the oystercatcher, the turnstone, the White-fronted and Kittlitz's plovers and the two gulls are virtually omnipresent.

Robben Island, much the largest and best documented, has 48 species recorded from it; Dassen, much smaller and rather further offshore, only 29. Schapen, less than one quarter the size of Dassen, but only about a quarter mile from shore, has 47 species. There are no records from Vondeling, except the four species mentioned by Rand in his account of the guano islands. Malgas, about a quarter the size of Schapen and twice as far from shore, has 17 species, and Bird Island, even smaller but the closest of all to shore, 21.

If we ignore the seabirds, we find that Robben Island is still the richest, with 22 species. It is followed by Schapen with 16 and Dassen with 8. Malagas has three (Rock Pigeon, European Starling and Cape Weaver) and the other islands none.

It is, however, clear that there are lots of birds which must occur on some of the islands but have not yet been recorded - the Common Sandpiper, for instance, is only recorded from Bird Island, but must occur on the others; and the same applies to the Whimbrel, recorded only from Robben and Schapen. The Common Tern is recorded from only three islands, the Sandwich and Swift Terns from two and the Pied Kingfisher from Schapen. More records, please!

(On 20 March 1965 I saw on Malagas several Cape Wagtails and about a dozen European Swallows. According to the warden, Mr. Taljaard, a pair of European Sparrows raised two young on Malagas in October/November 1964. On 19 March 1966 I myself saw European Sparrows and again Cape Wagtails on Malagas. Editor)

EDITOR • R. K. SCHMIDT "STRIEGAU" LYMPLEIGH RD PLUMSTEAD CAPE -
REDAKTEUR • LYMPLEIGHWEG PLUMSTEAD KAAP -

A clever Wagtail

In September last year Mr. Waltner paid a visit to the orchid hothouse in the Cape Town Gardens. When entering through the door he noticed a Cape Wagtail flying out. Inside, he soon discovered a nest with two feathered chicks in a hanging flower basket about 9 feet above the ground. The gardener told him that previously the wagtails had been able to enter through some broken panes in the glass roof, but these had been repaired, and now their only way of entering was through open windows or the door. The latter way was rather complicated as the hothouse has an entrance hall and two doors have actually to be opened to get inside.

Mr. Waltner observed the bird come into the entrance hall from outside when a person left the hothouse, but then it had to wait until someone opened the second door leading into the hothouse itself. When he left, the bird followed him through both doors.

Ant-eating Chats near Cape Town

On 18 February, 1970 Prof. Winterbottom observed two Ant-eating Chats on the road between Melkbos and the Darling road. This appeared to him at the time to be the nearest point to Cape Town this species had yet been recorded.

On 22 March 1970 Mr. Morgan saw one Ant-eating Chat at Paarden Island which is even nearer.

On 15 March 1970 Mr. Morgan observed an Arctic Skua (light phase) on the ground near the Mouille Point Lighthouse. According to him this is a good spot to see Skuas in case you want to add them to your Annual List of birds seen.

Lucky recovery of ringed Wader

Prof. Winterbottom drew my attention to this recovery, which may have been overlooked by other members as well. In the 14th Ringing Report in the March 1970 Ostrich, on page 85, he writes:

"In December 1966 a number of Cape Bird Club members cooperated with the Percy FitzPatrick Institute staff in ringing Waders at Langebaan Lagoon and 7 Terek Sandpipers were among the birds ringed. I don't think it is generally known, since it was not reported to me at the time, that one of these Sandpipers was recovered six months later in the Tsilma district, U.S.S.R. (65 02 N, 51 58 E). This is a distance of 7.900 miles north-east.

Albino Crowned Plover

On 30 May 1970 Miss N. Williams saw an albino Crowned Plover on the sports field of one of the rugby clubs at the Green Point Common. It was in the company of two other Crowned Plovers, but after a short while it wandered off and was seen feeding with the many gulls and starlings on the same fields.

She has not had the opportunity of revisiting the Common to see what has become of it. It would be interesting if members living nearby could look out for it and submit further reports.

Grey-headed Gull records

On 1 June 1970 Mr. Lockhart observed one Grey-headed Gull at close range on the Velddrif Estuary, where many waders, including migrants such as Curlews and Whimbrels

were recorded. A very large concentration of Greater Flamingoes was also present.

Messrs. J. and R. McNaught Davis saw a single Grey-headed Gull near Hangklip Lighthouse and at the Gordon's Bay breakwater on 5 and 6 July resp. At Gordon's Bay an albino Black-headed Gull was seen by them. Two single Secretary Birds were seen near Hangklip.

Chairman's Report

During the period under consideration the Committee met eight times. There was an attendance of 83 %, only 2 % less than during the previous year.

During these meetings, many questions, the majority more or less routine ones, were dealt with. But there were a few which perhaps can be singled out and emphasised here.

1. During the meeting held on the 3rd of September, it was decided to have badges made and it was felt that the design should follow the S.A.O.S. car-sticker, picturing the Blue Crane on a black background. Five hundred of these badges were ordered. These badges are not specifically Cape Bird Club badges but more South African Ornithological Society badges. It is hoped that other branches of this Society will order these badges for their members.
2. At a meeting held on the 17th of February it was decided to present Honorary Members of the Club with badges struck of silver. Consequently a limited number of silver badges were ordered. At the same meeting a request of the Society to Branches to make a donation to the Bird Ringing Fund in view of the desparate financial position of the Ringing Organisation, was considered. After a rather short discussion it was unanimously decided to give a donation of R125 to the Ringing Fund.
3. At the meeting held on the 22nd April, a letter from a member was tabled in which the proceedings at outings were criticised. It was felt that the criticism was constructive and that the Committee should react positively to it. During a lengthy discussion it was decided to, in future, split members attending an outing into small groups, each with a leader, and to ask all members of those groups to keep notes of the birds identified. At the end of the outing all information could be combined and briefly discussed. It was further decided to have a number of "informal Outings" attended by a limited number of especially interested members of the Club and during which contributions to specific investigation projects could be made.

Excursions and Meetings

During the past year there were 12 Evening Meetings as announced on the program of the year and an additional one, which was the talk by Dr. Hans Kummerloeve on Asia Minor.

As usual, these meetings were well attended.

There were 12 outings, which all proved very popular.

Membership

The membership to date is 378, only 13 more than the previous year. May I appeal to members to try hard to enroll new members?

If each member would bring on one new member, the membership would be doubled. Let us try.

Sub-Committees and Scheme Organisers

Again during the year which lies behind us a number of kind ladies were responsible for making tea at the different evening meetings. Mrs. Mariette Broekhuysen again acted as organiser and in addition had a full share in actually helping with the tea. To all these ladies we are extremely grateful.

Mrs. Jane Sawkins again very efficiently arranged permission for the different excursions. She also organised this year the Annual Dinner which will take place tomorrow night.

The Club thanks her for all she did this year.

Mr. Rudolf Schmidt, the Club's Vice Chairman, not only edited the News Letter, of which three issues have appeared, and the fourth is just about to appear, but also took the Chair whenever the Chairman could not make it. Also many thanks to him. We like to thank also Mariette Broekhuysen for always so willingly typing the stencils of the News Letter.

Prof. Jack Winterbottom again looked after the Field Card Scheme and Mr. George Underhill after the Nest Record Card Scheme.

Your Chairman again acted as Branch Organiser of Ringing, which function, incidently, has now become an extremely easy one with the Ringing Organiser of the Society taking over so much of the work.

He also continued as the S.A.C.S. Recorder for Movements of Migratory Species.

Mr. Alan Morris once more was in charge of the Club's Slide Collection.

Retiring committee members

Four Committee Members have decided not to make themselves available for re-election. They are Mrs. Mariette Broekhuysen, Mrs. Jane Sawkins, Mr. W. Pringle and Mr. John Perry. All four feel that some new blood should come into the Committee. It is with regret that we have to honour and accept their decision. They have been very effective members of the committee, always extremely helpful and obliging.

The Club owes them a lot of thanks and appreciation for what they have done.

In ending this report it gives me pleasure to once again express the Club's appreciation and gratefulness to Professor John Day for again allowing the Club to use the main lecturehall for its proceedings.

I also like to thank the Director of the Percy Fitz-Patrick Institute of African Ornithology for the use of

the Institute's Library for the informal gatherings after the evening meetings.

G.J. Broekhuysen,
Chairman.

Report on Field Cards, 1969-70

The collection continues to grow, if more slowly than it should. The main contributors, in addition to the organiser, have been Miss D. Clarke, Miss Williams, Messrs. P. Lockhart, R. Martin and G.D. Underhill. Monthly records of birds from Mrs. Hodgson (Betty's Bay), Messrs. Arnott (Hermanus), Kihn (Clanwilliam) and Norman (Citrusdal) have also been most useful.

The total number of the cards which deal with specific habitats, and are the most valuable of the collection, is 5003, divided as follows:

Oceanic	4	Strandveld	182
Offshore	124	Mountain Renosterbosveld	7
Offshore Islands	18	Coastal Renosterbosveld	151
Rocky Shores	139	Coastal Macchia	486
Cliffs	7	Macchia	567
Sandy Shores	129	Dense Proteas	61
Docks	26	False Macchia	5
Mud-flats	27	Indigenous Forest	135
Lagoons	162	Mixed Exotic Trees	72
Salt Pans	23	Oaks	12
Salt Marshes	21	Pines	36
Permanent Vleis	654	Gums	16
Temporary Vleis	530	Wattles	207
Reservoirs	3	Ploughed Fields	58
Reed-beds	82	Pastures	311
Swamps	14	Grain-fields	108
Tree-lined Rivers	84	Vineyards	75
Rivers with Sandy Beds	20	Orchards	11
Sand Dunes	6	Vegetable Gardens	2
Precipices	3	Town Gardens	333
Succulent Karoo	15	Farm-yards	57
Karroid Broken Veld	24	Quarries	4

The unevenness of the spread between the various habitats is obvious. We particularly need more cards for Mountain Renosterbosveld (to be found in Worcester District) and False Macchia, to see how their fauna compares with those of other indigenous bush habitats.

In addition to the habitat cards, there are others dealing with individual localities or Districts. Though less valuable than the habitat cards, they are useful for geographical and seasonal distribution. Omitting a few cards for extra-limital District, the cards of this type number 1363, distributed as follows:

Bellville	76	Piketberg	69
Bredasdorp	67	Robertson	75
Caledon	134	Somerset West	172
Ceres	36	Stellenbosch	14
Clanwilliam	116	Swellendam	97

Hopefield	47	Tulbagh	36
Malmesbury	66	Vanrhynsdorp	29
Paarl	88	Wellington	50
Peninsula	43	Worcester	129

The most urgent need for more cards of this type is from Vanrhynsdorp.

During the present year, the organiser has published an analysis of the Wattle cards.

J.M. Winterbottom,
Organiser.