



CAPE BIRD CLUB : KAAPSE VOËLWAARNEMERSKLUB

NEWSLETTER - NUUSBRIEF

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Last summer Messrs Pfister and Waltner started catching Palaearctic waders with mist-nets. They had some encouraging results, but their total of 164 birds (cf. Ringing Report in this Newsletter) was only a small reward for their hard work. I accompanied them several times to Philippi and Kommetjie and I knew that they either started long before sunrise or returned long after sunset. Their search for waders extended as far as Saldanha Bay.

At the beginning of this summer the two really went all out looking for possibilities of catching waders in great numbers. And success came with their finding a roosting place of Curlew Sandpipers in a small vlei at Paarden Island. Now things started happening with thousands of waders congregating in a small area. On 8th December Messrs Pfister, Wilson and I netted 68 Curlew Sandpipers and 6 Little Stints, there between sunset and midnight. One evening Mr Waltner went out alone and found himself with 120 waders in the net. Most of you will hardly be able to imagine what it means to get such a lot out of the net in the dark of night. He accomplished this, but arrived home only the next morning at six o'clock. You will realise that such outings may be quite a strain on family relations at times. As a reward for his efforts he netted the first Knot at Paarden Island and took it to Prof. Winterbottom who established that this was the first record of a Knot for the Cape Peninsula (the bird was of course released after having received such VIP treatment). Later 5 more Knots were caught at this vlei.

Messrs Clarke, Cooper, Elliot, Underhill, Pringle and on one occasion Prof. Broekhuysen joined the ringing team, more nets were put up and on 12 December 203 Curlew Sandpipers and 7 Little Stints were caught. The vlei started drying up towards the end of December, but just over 1000 Curlew Sandpiper had been ringed before they stopped roosting there. This compares very well with the figure of 1794 Curlew Sandpipers ringed altogether up to 30 June 1968 and raises hopes for some interesting recoveries, such as the one from Rondevlei to Donets River, U.S.S.R., 6625 miles north (cf. 14th Ringing Report, Ostrich March 1970).

Mr. Wilson who has a big share in this wader ringing, is a bit worried that hardly any European Swallows have been caught so far this season. The late Mr. MacLeod's aim of tracing the movements of these swallows during their stay in South Africa has not yet been achieved. Unfortunately Aldermans Vlei at

Firgrove is no longer used as a roost by large numbers of swallows. On 15 January 1971 I recaptured a European Swallow at Philippi which had been ringed by MacLeod at Aldermans Vlei on 5 December 1969. There must be hundreds of such ringed swallows in the Western Cape and they should be controlled.

So will members please help with the locating of swallow roosts. To find such a roost you must look out for flights of swallows coming down into reed-beds in the period 15 minutes before to 15 minutes after sunset.

Phalaropes at Strandfontein.

On 8th January 1971 Mr W. Pringle and Stephen invited me to accompany them to the Sewage Farm where they had seen 5 Phalarope. We were extremely lucky and found the 5 birds feeding and swimming around in the corner of a pan where we could watch them from the car. Consulting half a dozen birdbooks and comparing pictures as well as descriptions with the live birds so close to us, we became convinced that they must be Red-necked Phalarope as their bills and feet were black. Later the Pringles together with Prof. Winterbottom saw the birds again and he also thought they might be Red-necked Phalarope. In winter plumage the two species of Phalarope look very similar, the Red-necked would be a new record for the South Western Cape (cf. 1963 Check List). The 5 birds were still there on 31st January 1971.

Good places for bird-watching.

Mr. Robbie Martin from Somerset West reports:

On 2nd August 1970 we visited the Riviersonderend Forest Reserve near Lindeshof. This is an indigenous forest situated on the southern slopes of the Riviersonderend mountain range, in the extreme north-east of the Caledon district. Although it is the largest indigenous forest in the C.B.C. area, it has not been explored ornithologically, apart from Prof. Winterbottom's brief visit in April 1957. (See C.B.C. Newsletter No. 43).

The bush surrounding the forest was full of birds including the Swee Waxbill, Victorin's Warbler and four species of sunbirds, of which the Greater Double-collared was the most common. The forest itself had far fewer species. The most interesting was perhaps the Olive Woodpecker, several Cinnamon Doves were seen. Also seen, amongst others, were Saw-wing Swallows, Cape Batis and Sombre Bulbuls. The Greater Double-collared Sunbirds were quite common in the forest too.

It is quite possible that species such as the Forest Canary and the Blue-mantled Flycatcher, which are known to occur at Swellendam, will be recorded from here.

On our return home we noted an African Jacana on a small temporary vlei near Riviersonderend. This, and the Olive Woodpecker, are new records for the Caledon district. The Greater Double-collared Sunbird appears only in the Appendix of the C.B.C. checklist.

Perhaps one of the most interesting places for birds in our area is Doornrivier in the Worcester district, where two C.B.C. outings have been held. Many birds, normally seen only on the Karoo, are present in this area, and it is not unusual to see species such as the Rufous-eared Warbler, Layard's Tit-babbler, Yellow-bellied Eremomela and even the White-breasted Prinia.

On the farm Lemoenpoort we have noted the Lesser Honeyguide and recently the Cardinal Woodpecker and the Banded Harrier-Hawk. Moordkuil Dam, when it holds water, is well worth a visit as large numbers of water birds congregate there.

on 15th May 1970 R. Martin picked up a dead Cape Eagle Owl in the Caledon district near the Frenchhoek Pass. Dr. R. Siegfried confirmed the identification.

Do Cape Sparrows kill their young?

Mrs. Hilda Gay reports: On 2nd November, in my garden at Plumstead, I picked up a fully-fledged juvenile Cape Sparrow which was still warm. It had been disembowelled, one eye was pecked out and most of the feathers on the head were missing. I surmised this to be the work of a Fiscal Shrike.

Returning home about an hour later I noticed two sparrows in the roadway fighting (as I thought). However, they appeared to have something underneath them, and on investigation this turned out to be another juvenile Cape Sparrow, the same age as the previous one. It was still alive when rescued, one eye was damaged and the feathers on one side of the head pecked out, otherwise it was in fairly good shape. I tried to feed it according to instructions given in Bokmakierie December 1969, but it died about 12 hours later.

The garden is full of sparrows and although I have noticed adults fighting among themselves occasionally, I have always considered them very indulgent parents who feed their young long after they should fend for themselves.

Have any members made similar observations?

RINGING ACTIVITIES BY MEMBERS OF THE CAPE BIRD CLUB DURING THE PERIOD 30 June 1969 TO 1 JULY 1970.

During the period under consideration a total of 6969 birds were ringed.

79 species were involved.

The largest number of these birds consisted of European Swallows caught by a team headed by the late Jack MacLeod. For the last years Jack MacLeod had practically concentrated entirely on the catching of European Swallows assisted by a small group of other members of the Cape Bird Club. We will all miss him very much and the Club has lost one of its most devoted ringers.

Again during this year Robben Island was visited, this time twice and a considerable number of Hartlaub Gull chicks and Swift Tern chicks were ringed in the large gullery. This was done by C.C.Elliott, G.J. Broekhuysen, M.J. Jarvis, G.Wilson, S. Pringle, P. Broekhuysen and M. Waltner

The following members of the C.B.C. were active in the field of ringing:

Ringers	No. of species	No. of birds
J. MacLeod, N. Myburgh, G. Wilson, J. Martin, Mrs. Knipe	4	4601
G. Wilson, G. Underhill	65	1370
C.C. Elliott, G.J. Broekhuysen, M. Jarvis, G. Wilson, S. Pringle, P. Broekhuysen, M. Waltner.	2	550
S. Pringle	25	168
H.P. Fister, M. Waltner	14	164
R.K. Schmidt	19	79
A.R. Brown	8	31
G.J. Broekhuysen	1	6

Of the following species 20 or more were ringed:

<u>Species</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>No.</u>
Three-banded plover	46	Kittlitz plover	27
Little Stint	170	Curlew Sandpiper	62
Sanderling	75	Hartlaub Gull	385
Swift Tern	167	European Swallow	4777
White-throated Swallow	73	African Sandmartin	560
Greater Striped Swallow	22	Rock Martin	45
White-rumped Swift	20	Lesser Double-	
Cape Wagtail	21	collared Sunbird	42
Cape White-eye	41	Cape Bulbul	50
Common Waxbill	21	Cape Bunting	21
Cape Weaver	56		

G.J. Broekhuysen.