

NEWSLETTER - NUUSBRIEF

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NR

September 1971

Not only people feel the Spring.

If you thought Spring had come to the Cape on that warm Thursday, 9th September, you were not the only one. The White-rumped Swifts shared your opinion.

By checking three nests in Plumstead every night from 20th August, I could record the first returned Swift on 28th August. He was a real early bird, because the other two nests remained unoccupied until 9th September, our first day of Spring weather.

The cold nights and the rainy spells at the end of August and the beginning of September seem to be the explanation for the late return, but I wonder why such late returns were recorded only in 1970 and 71, whereas in previous years not only the first, but several White-rumped Swifts returned before the end of August. First arrivals at Plumstead were:

1963:	29 August	1967:	21 August
1964:	26 "	1968:	18 "
1965:	23 "	1969:	23 "
1966:	24 "	1970:	not before 4th September when I went down with flu.

These data show that by watching a bird species for only one or two years, one might draw wrong conclusions.

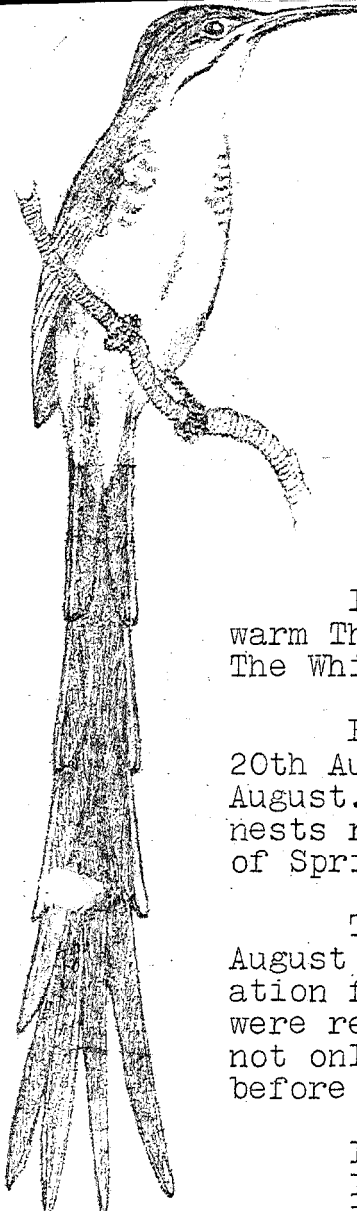
I recorded the first Larger Striped Swallow at Plumstead on 28th August which is the same date as last year and the normal time of return.

Martial Eagle in the Hottentots Holland Mountains.

Mr. Lockhart reports that on 18th August 71, while walking near the Stellenbosch mountain at Stellenrust Farm, he observed one adult Martial Eagle flying around the mountain. When watched through binoculars the bird showed the typical brown throat and white breast, slightly spotted, of an adult and was larger than the average Black Eagle. There were no whitish "windows" at the base of the primaries and no white on the rump, characteristics of the Black Eagle. Upper parts of the bird were dark brown. This species has been seen by others in the Helderberg and Hottentots Holland mountains. Messrs J MacLeod, J. Martin and the Curator of the Helderberg Nature Reserve have seen this vagrant species in the past.

On 27th August at Klavervlei, Mr. Lockhart witnessed an African Coot chasing a Purple Gallinule from ground, which the Coot considered to be its territory, at the edge of the vlei. The Coot was most aggressive and twice the Gallinule ran away into the reeds pursued by the Coot. Owing to the thickness of the reeds it could not be decided whether the Coot was guarding its nest.

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Hadedas Ibis at Somerset West.

Mr. John Martin reports: On 29th August 71, Douglas Wood of the Helderberg Nature Reserve, Somerset West, reported having seen four strange birds on a field at Vergelegen that evening, and from his description they appeared to be Hadedas. Early next morning he and Mr. Lockhart returned to the field, but there was no sign of the birds.

At 6.40 a.m. on 8th September I thought I heard a Hadedas calling over Somerset West and listening very carefully, heard it call a second time, but farther away. On mentioning this to Mr. Thorpe, a local member of the S.A.O.S., I was told that he had also heard the calls.

Nest Record Card Project.

The number of cards submitted by the 36 contributors to the project during 1970 is shown against each name. They were: Mrs. M.H. Broekhuysen 4, Professor G.J. Broekhuysen 16, P. Broekhuysen 1, A.R. Brown 22, D. Blaker 5, E.J.H. Dale 1, C.C. Elliott 390, R.G. Jeffrey 5, Mrs. M. Knipe 4, Mrs. G. Lipp 9, R.S. Lockhart 55, Mrs. E. Martin 23, J. Martin 48, R. Martin 19, Jack Macleod 6, W. Mangold 2, John Moore 6, N. Myburgh 6, H.P. Pfister 4, J.S. Pringle 35, Dr. B. Rauch 1, B.W. Rowlands 10, Mrs. J. Sawkins 3, Dr. W.R. Siegfried 10, R.K. Schmidt 48, Peter Steyn 11, A.J. Tree 2, L.G. Underhill 3, G.D. Underhill 422, F. van der Merwe 9, M. Walter 6, Miss N. Williams 23, G. Wilson 12, Mrs. M.G. Winterbottom 1, Professor J.M. Winterbottom 12. A total of 1431 nest record cards was filed: of these 16 were colonial cards referring to large numbers of nests. Nesting by 107 species was recorded but for 46 of these there were but one or two cards.

Ten or more cards were received for the following species:

Egyptian Goose	17	Cape Turtle Dove	22
Yellow-billed Duck	12	Laughing Dove	26
Cape Teal	14	White-rumped Swift	10
Cape Shoveller	100	Cape Wagtail	12
Red-knobbed Coot	258	Tawny Pipit	20
Black Oystercatcher	14	Cape Robin	14
Black-winged Stilt	21	Karoo Prinia	20
White-fronted Plover	11	Lesser Double-collared Sunbird	13
Crowned Plover	14	Sugarbird	15
Blacksmith Plover	21	Cape Weaver	394
Cape Sparrow	33		

Last year 30 species featured in the plus-10 category: this year there are only 21. Allow me, at this stage to make my usual appeal to all members not to relax in the efforts to record the nesting of our common species. It is perhaps interesting to record that the S.A.O.S. collection now includes, for the South-West Cape, more than 500 cards for the following: Cape Shoveller, Stilt, Kittlitz's Plover, Laughing Dove, Cape Wagtail, Cape Robin, Karoo Prinia, Cape Sugarbird and Cape Weaver; more than 1000 for the Cape Turtle Dove and almost 2000 for the Coot.

The raptors, however, seem to be a neglected group. Over the past seven years, 41 cards for 8 species have been received. This year there were only two cards for the Rock Kestrel by R.G. Jeffrey from the Potberg and one card for the Black-shouldered Kite by Dr. Rauch from the residential part of Cape Town. Still more amazing, not a single card was received during 1970 for the Hamerkop, Avocet, Cape Bishop or the House Sparrow.

The following records fill in some of the gaps in the files. The first card since 1966 for the Sombre Bulbul and the first since 1965 for the Pied Kingfisher were both submitted by Steve Pringle.

A record of the Lark-like Bunting was received from Robert Martin - the first since 1967. Mr. Schmidt maintained his usual check on the nesting of the Larger Striped Swallow and the White-rumped Swift. For the latter species he has handed in over 100 cards since 1964. Mrs. Broekhuysen, on a visit to Robben Island, completed colonial cards for the Hartlaub's Gull and the Swift Tern. Mr. Clive Elliott has made available the results of his observations of the breeding of the Cape Weaver for 1968 and 1969. As a result about 400 cards for this species have been completed.

To all supporters of the project I express my sincere thanks. Be it one or five hundred please record every nest found.

G.D.Underhill.
Project Organiser.

Attention all members! Buy your Xmas cards from the S.A.O.S. For further information watch the September issue of the Bokmakierie.