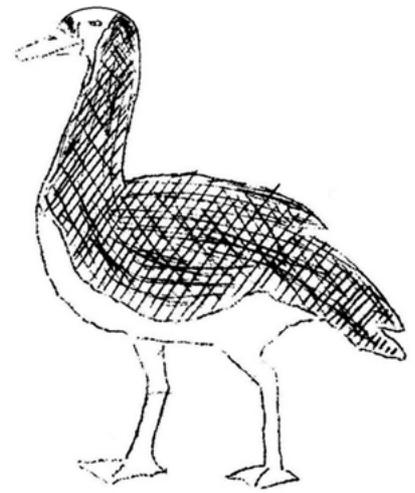


# Rhodesian Ornithological Society Bulletin No. 14

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Editor: Dr. R.M. Harwin, City Health Dept., P.O. Box 1946 Bulawayo.

## *News from sub-branches*

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Salisbury: A visit was arranged to the Southern Carmine Bee-eater colony in October. Photographers W.T. Miller and R.N. Bloomfield had a field day, and it is hoped to show their films soon.

Mr. R.H.N. Smithers always calls in when he visits the capital, and his visits are much appreciated. Messrs' Rankin and Irwin joined him this year in the National Museum's expedition to Northern Bechuanaland and got so far into the interior that they decided to stay on after the remainder of the expedition had returned.

Bulawayo & Selukwe: A new venture was the combined weekend meeting of these two branches at Selukwe on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> November. Unfortunately rain restricted field work to a few hours (albeit a few most promising hours) on the Sunday morning; but an instructive time was spent examining the collection of skins, and in the evening some films were shown by Mr. Smithers and Dr. Harwin, of the National Museum's recent expedition, and of methods of bird ringing respectively.

## *Didericks, doves and babblers*

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June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1954 will stick in my memory because on that date I saw and heard a Diderick Cuckoo. His voice was muted and his plumage dull compared with the one which called all summer from a gum growing next to an incredibly large and ancient kaffir-boom shading the enclosure where the cattle sleep. All its proportions are vast and if only it could talk and tell us of the love, hate and death dramas which have taken place amongst and in the shade of its spreading branches! A pair of Little Banded Goshawks [Shikra] once successfully reared a brood in its crown, and for some years I could always count on seeing them in the garden and gums; but for over a year now they have absented themselves.

This brings me to the subject of the changing bird population. Up to eighteen months ago the Cape Turtle-dove was by far the commonest of its family, but it has now yielded first place to the Laughing Dove. The Namaqua Dove has increased, and the Emerald-spotted Wood-dove appeared for the first time.

I think some of our doves' calls could be interpreted thus:

Cape Turtle-dove: "Work harder, work harder"

Red-eyed Doves. "Oh no. You can't do that! Oh no. You can't do that!"

After a while, he seems to get tired and content himself with

"No you cannot. No you cannot." I believe this shorter call is used when near the nest. His call, habits and size most resemble the European Wood Pigeon, whose "Take two coos, Taffy; take two coos, Taffy; take two coos, Taffy" followed by a pause, and then "Take" is heard all over the British Isles, and reminds one of hot days before thunderstorms in July and August.

Namaqua Dove: "Oh no, oh no" repeated. In fact all these dove calls are repeated. He seems to be contradicting the advice of the Cape Turtle-dove, but in actual fact, when watching a nest in October this year, I gathered that the cock Namaqua Dove does most of the incubating.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> August, a fledgling Jardine's Babbler [Arrow-marked Babbler] was brought to me. From its size and feathering I judged it to be ten days old. This means that the parents must have commenced nesting operations at the beginning of July! Before this I always thought that they nested during the rains.

The farm where all this occurred is nine miles southeast of Salisbury typical "Masasa veld", including all the vegetable forms implied in that term.

"Tinnunculus"

### Spring migration

Mr. H.M. Miles, P.O. Box 16, Causeway, is waiting for you to send in your dates of the arrival of migrants to him. Information required is the species, date, number if possible, and any further comments you may think necessary. For example, here are some arrival dates recently noted by the Acting Hon. Secretary at Gatooma:

Yellow-billed Kite	Sept	6	Great Spotted Cuckoo	Oct	9
Violet-backed Starling	"	26	Red-chested Cuckoo	"	10
European Bee-eater	Oct	3	Barn Swallow	"	10
African Paradise-flycatcher		3	Diderick Cuckoo	"	11
Jacobin Cuckoo	"	4	Spotted Flycatcher	Nov.	7
Willow Warbler	"	7	Red-backed Shrike	"	10

The Grey Plover appeared in 1951 on Sept 7; on Aug 24 1952; Nov 15 1953; and Sept 5 1954. Each there there was a single one, possibly the same individual.

### Nest record card analyses

Wahlberg's Eagle. 18 cards, 42 clutches. August to September.

viii	ix	c/1
1	41	42

A.W. Stander made an early record of a very large, fresh egg on 12 Sept. It measured 67.5 x 52.2.

Layard's Bulbul [Dark-capped Bulbul]. 16 cards, 28 clutches. August to January.

viii	ix	x	xi	xii	i	c/3	c/2
1	6	10	6	3	2	17	11

Miss I. Rorke, Mrs. D. Searson and E.A. Edwards got both incubation and fledging periods.

Scarlet-chested Sunbird. 16 cards, 32 clutches. August to December

viii	ix	x	xi	xii	c/3	c/2	c/1
2	11	12	3	4	2	27	3

The cards seem to indicate a very high mortality, only one chick being reared as a rule

H.M. Miles.

### MORE NOTES FROM SANYATI

I recently watched some Wire-tailed Swallow fledglings clinging to the rim of their nest and fluttering like mad. The parents sat on the window 3 or 4 feet away, encouraging them. Next day, the same thing happened practically all day. The parents would fly to the babies with food in their beaks, hover over them, then back to the window, obviously trying to entice them off the nest. This would

be repeated several times, then, presumably the parents realised the babies would not leave the nest, they fed them. The following morning, one baby decided to take the plunge, flew off, and settled on a tree in front of the house, attended by both parents. The latter then left it there and came back to the other two, who both left the nest together at 3 p.m. After flying around a bit, they all returned to the nest, and now they can be seen perched on the trees in front of the house, or flying about during the day; but at night they all return to roost in the nest. This is the first time this has happened once the fledglings have been able to fly. Today there is another pair of swallows here, which seem to want to occupy the nest or build here and there is a terrific battle on. I really feel sorry for the new arrivals, for the old pair is very ferocious.

For some time I have heard a Toppie [Dark-capped Bulbul] in front of the house, and lately a lot of twittering sounds have come from one of the trees. Yesterday afternoon I found the nest – well hidden in the fork of a branch, built in among the leaves. Whether I frightened them by walking under the spot I do not know, but I saw two adults and two smaller birds fly off in a panic. This morning I saw them again in another tree, feeding the youngsters.

A pair of Martial Eagles has been worrying me, taking my young chicks. Every time they have grabbed one they fly away in the same direction towards the Umfuli, which makes me think they have a nest with young. We shot a Tawny Eagle the other day – not a very big one, and this morning I hit a Martial Eagle, but did not manage to bring it down. We watched it losing height but lost sight after a while. There is also another Tawny Eagle, so cunning I can't get a crack at it, but one day it will slip up like the first one. Just now I have 35 chicks left out of 60.

(Mrs.) R. Collins.

### When he calls "CUCKOO"....

The fact that the Common Cuckoo gets its name from its call is one example of how much more often cuckoos are heard than seen. Of the African Cuckoos, the Diderick also "calls its own name", while the Afrikaans names *Piet-my-vrou* and *Meitjie* are also onomatopoeic. The cuckoos, it fact, all have peculiar, mournful, monotonous call notes and it is even possible to say of a quite unfamiliar call "That is a cuckoo of some sort"

How often is the Red-chested Cuckoo seen? On the other hand, its *Piet-my-vrou* or "Whee, whee, wheeyu" is well known. In drier, open bush country, the laboured "Whooo, wheee" of the Black Cuckoo is more likely to be heard. The "Dee-dee-dee-dee-diderick" of the Diderick Cuckoo is too well known to be further dwelt on. His cousin, Klaas's Cuckoo has a call usually rendered *Meitjie*, but as it has three syllables, it is better described as "Mei-i-tjie" or "Too-it-chee", usually repeated three times.

The calls of the various crested cuckoos are less easily described, but nevertheless all have the family resemblance. The commonest, the Jacobin Cuckoo, has a variety of calls, one of which sounds like "Quer-quick-ick, quer-quick-ick, quick, ick, ick"

## Reminder

The Annual General Meeting will take place in the National Museum, Bulawayo, on January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1955. Please make an effort to attend. A.G.M's. are hardly ever as dull as you think they are going to be!