



Rhodesian Ornithological Society Bulletin No. 15

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Nest Records

When Dr. W. Buttiker left Rhodesia, he left behind him a number of nesting boxes with which he and others had been experimenting, without success. It almost looked as if our local birds were not interested, until last October, when Mr. G.L Donald at last persuaded a pair of Red-winged Starlings to use one of them, in which they successfully reared 5 chicks.

Mr. A.B. Fletcher has recorded the growth of a family of young White-backed Ducks on a dam 20 miles from Gatooma. Breeding records of ducks and geese are urgently needed for the African Wildfowl Enquiry, and at present are few and far between. What about some more?

At Plumtree, in January and February, Ian Cannell found over a dozen nests of the African Crake and Lesser Moorhen. Unfortunately the flood caused the loss of some young Lesser Moorhen chicks.

R. Kemp has recorded what must be one of the largest known colonies of the Little Swift in Southern Rhodesia, in the heart of Wankie Colliery.

H. Miles.

Editor's note. If any other members have had any success with meeting boxes, we'd be glad to hear from them. Perhaps our birds have enough natural nesting sites not to worry about them. Stripe-breasted Swallows [Lesser Striped Swallow], however, can be persuaded to use cardboard tubes hung under the eaves of a house.

OSPREY AT HILLSIDE DAMS, BULAWAYO

On the morning of January 10th, while walking along the wall of the upper dam, Hillside, we saw a large hawk perched on a dead tree. Although some distance away we could see, through binoculars, the very pale crown compared with the dark brown of the wings. The bird left its perch and flew around for a minute or two, enabling us to see pale underparts and barred undertail feathers. Then, to our amazement, it dived into the water head first, went right under, and rose again after a second or two with much splashing and flapping. Still following it with our glasses, we noticed that after regaining height, it appeared to stop in mid-air and shake itself, as though to get rid of the water on its feathers. A little while later, the whole performance, including the pause and quivering movement, was repeated, before the bird finally flew from sight.

The bird was identified with the aid of *Roberts* and *Priest* as an Osprey, and although the latter states he has had no personal experience of the bird, we were thrilled to find that the Osprey does dive head first into the water, and not feet first like the Fish Eagle; also the following quotation from *Seton Gordon*, "...almost invariably, in rising from the water after his dive, he will be seen to stop in mid-air for a fraction of a second, and (a) spasmodic quiver will be seen to pass over his body from head to tail to shake off the water before he continues his flight."

H.J. Bradford

Migration

The response to the appeal in *Bulletin* No. 14 for arrival dates was on the whole very poor. Now the time for autumn migration has come round, and it will be in full swing by the time this reaches you; so how about making up for it by noting some departure dates? Mr. Miles, P.O. Box 8018, Causeway, will be very glad to have them.

Yellow Wagtails have been much in evidence this season, and an example of the black headed race *Motacilla flava feldegg* was obtained in Bulawayo for the National Museum.

Mr. R.A. Jubb writes; "I had to spend September to November in Nyasaland [Malawi], and saw no migratory birds arrive in this colony. During the period 12 to 15 November thousands of Cape Sandmartins [Brown-throated Martin] passed through Chileka. At the same time there were flocks of Caspian Plovers on the aerodrome. In Salisbury our Eastern Nightingale [Thrush Nightingale] returned on the 15th December. This is the 8th year this species has returned to our garden. It sings beautifully from about 4.30 a.m. to just before 6 a.m.

Ringing

This continues to be an individual affair. We single out for mention David Cumming of Milton School, Mr. Coffin-Gray of the National Museum, and Mr. G.H. Brewer who has pioneered ringing in Umtali, concentrating chiefly on Hooded Finches [Bronze Mannikin].

The most interesting return of a Rhodesian-ringed bird recently is a Red-billed Quelea, ringed at the Matopos in October 1952, and recovered just two years later at Bothaville in the Orange Free State.

The Southern Pochard is a bird which has not yet been ringed in Rhodesia; but some interesting recoveries of Union-ringed birds are coming in — one from just beyond our borders at Mahalapye. Of three Transvaal birds, the first is the Mahalapye recovery just mentioned; another was shot in Ovamboland, and a third on Lake Naivasha in Kenya. There is also a fourth recovery of a bird which found its way from Cape Town to the Orange Free State.

E.H. Ashton

BRANCH NEWS

A meeting of the Mashonaland Branch was held on the 26th January to welcome the new President and Hon. Secretary. Mr. Smithers took the opportunity of telling members about the AGM in Bulawayo, and also about the extensive renovations taking place at the Queen Victoria Museum. Among points discussed were proxy voting at the AGM and the question of holding more meetings and outings. The following day Mr. Smithers showed a film, but this was unfortunately poorly attended, the branch being handicapped by having no proper place to meet or show films. A committee consisting of Dr. N.A. Campbell and Mr. C.S. Mitchell has now been formed to arrange such meetings,

Matabeleland members refused to let a rainy day put off their visit to the Hon. Humphrey Gibbs' farm, and were rewarded by an interesting day's birdwatching, one of the most noteworthy species seen being the Little Bittern. Easily the most successful of the evening meetings this year was Mr. J. Wightman's film show, and many latecomers found that they could not squeeze into the room available.

MINUTES OF THE 4TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE RHODESIAN ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY, HELD IN THE NATIONAL MUSEUM BULAWAYO ON THE THIRD JANUARY 1965 AT 5.15 P.M.

Present: Captain R.H.R. Stevenson (President), Miss M. Paterson (Hon. Secretary), Mr. A.B. Fletcher (Hon. Treasurer), Miss S. Andrews, Dr. E.H. Ashton, Mr. & Mrs. H.J. Bradford, Mr. & Mrs. C.W. Buchanan, Master Ian Cannell, Brigadier J. Deedes, Mrs. H. Doudney, Mr. D. Eccles, Mr. & Mrs. C.W.

Hall, Mr. W.J. Merry, Mr. D.C.H. Plowes, Mr. F. Porter, Mrs. N. Sharpe, Mr. R.H.N. Smithers, Dr. L. Westwater, Mr. & Mrs. J. Wightman, Mrs. Hemans (Guest).

Apologies: Dr. R.M. Harwin, Major E.L. Haydock, Mr. M. Kelly, Mr. H. Miles, Miss I. Rorke.

1). The Minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

2). Matters arising out of the previous Minutes: a.) The Bulletin is now being produced by Dr. Harwin.

3). President's Report

In his report, Captain Stevenson said that the various sub—Branches had been active during the past year. Mr. Miles was still organising the nest record card scheme, and 333 species had been recorded, representative of the whole of Southern Rhodesia. The Bulawayo branch had organised a number of outings and lectures, and the Selukwe branch had collected a large number of birds for the Museum and made some very interesting observations. There were now 28 registered Birds' Egg Collectors, each with his own registered mark.

4). Financial report and Balance Sheet: 14th February to 20th December 1954. In April 1954, the office of treasurer was taken over by Mr. A.B. Fletcher and the financial position was reported to have improved considerably; the balance in hand being £64.6.6. It was agreed to pay Dr. Harwin £10 for expenses in the publication of the *Bulletin*. There are now 155 adult members and 22 junior members of the Society.

5). Election of Officers.

The following Committee was elected to serve for the coming year:

		<u>Proposed</u>	<u>Seconded</u>
President	Mr. R.H.N. Smithers	Mr. Buchanan	Mr. Fletcher
Vice-President	Captain Stevenson	Mr. Wightman	Mr. Plowes
Hon. Secretary	Miss M. Paterson	Capt. Stevenson	Mrs. Buchanan
Hon. Asst. Secretary	Mrs. Attwell	Capt. Stevenson	Mr. Fletcher
Hon. Treasurer	Mr. Fletcher	Capt. Stevenson	Mrs. Buchanan
Central Committee	Dr. Ashton	Mr. Wightman	Mr. Buchanan
	Mr. Plowes	Mr. Wightman	Brig. Deedes
	Mr. Rankine	Mr. Fletcher	Capt. Stevenson
	Dr. Saunders	Mr. Buchanan	Dr. Westwater
	Major Haydock	Mr. Fletcher	Mr. Plowes
	Mr. Stuart Irwin	Mr. Fletcher	Capt. Stevenson

Mr. Fletcher proposed that Branch Secretaries be members of the Committee; also the Editor of the *Bulletin*. This was seconded by Mr. Plowes. It was decided to amend Section 7 of the Constitution as follows: after the words "Hon. Treasurer" insert "Secretaries of sub-branches and the Editor of the Bulletin....." This was carried unanimously.

6). Report from the Editor of the Bulletin.

Mr. Smithers read a letter from Dr. Harwin conveying his apologies for being unable to present a report on the *Bulletin*.

7). Discussion on the future organisation of Branches.

Mr. Smithers said that each Branch required much more organisation. It was agreed to appoint a Treasurer for each sub-Branch. Mr. Hall was appointed for Matabeleland, proposed by Mr. Merry and seconded by Mr. Buchanan. It was agreed to send subscriptions to the local Treasurer, who would then know which of his branch members had paid their subscriptions — he should then forward them in bulk to the Branch Treasurer, who would deal with them accordingly.

It was proposed to ask Major Haydock to find a Secretary and Treasurer for Northern Rhodesia.

All subscriptions must be paid up by the 31st March, otherwise members won't receive publications of the Society.

8). Appointment of a recorder to the Bokmakierie.

Dr. Harwin was proposed by Mr. Fletcher and seconded by Dr. Westwater.

9). Other business.

Captain Stevenson said there was too much money in the hands of the Treasurer, and he suggested that this be used. Mr. Fletcher proposed that we send £25 to the SAOS and that at each Annual General Meeting we decide what amount of accumulated funds could be afforded to the SAOS. This was seconded by Mr. Plowes. It was suggested that the Committee should consider sending a further £25 when the subscriptions for the year are in. Mr. Bradford proposed that this money be sent specifically for publications, and was seconded by Mr. Hall.

Members were asked to make an effort to introduce new members.

The next Annual General Meeting to be held in the last 10 days of November, 1955.

A vote of thanks was moved to the Chairman.

The President declared the meeting closed.

Other news

A White Stork found dead at Eldorado, Sinoia, in February 1953, was found to be carrying the Danish ring, Z814. Mr. Halfdan Lange of Copenhagen, who ringed it, says that it was ringed as a nestling on the 21st June 1944 on the roof of the inn at Døstrup, Denmark, and was therefore nearly nine years old when it flew into a power line during a storm. In a further letter, he says that there are only 6 previous recoveries of Danish Storks in Southern Rhodesia, mostly pre-war. 1954 was a good year for storks, and the Danish National Museum has compiled a census of Danish breeding birds, while he has begun an analysis of their pellets. The chief contents appear to be beetles; vertebrate remains are scarce, but this may be due to the highly acid digestive juices, bones being rapidly dissolved.

Dr. Friedmann's book on Honeyguides is expected to appear this year. The honeyguides are one of the more interesting families of birds, and this book is eagerly awaited.

The Hon. Treasurer wishes to apologise to those members to whom he sent insufficiently stamped reminders about their subscriptions being due; particularly those who had in the meanwhile paid.

Moral: Make sure you pay your subscriptions on time.

Once more the Editor appeals to members to send in contributions for the *Bulletin*. Surely someone out of nearly 200 members has something he or she would like to tell the rest about!

The Nest Record cards now number over 2000 and cover about 350 species, but PLEASE don't rest on your laurels. This is mainly the work of about a dozen members. If you all recorded every nest you found, the result would come much closer to giving a picture of the breeding species of the Federation which is badly needed.