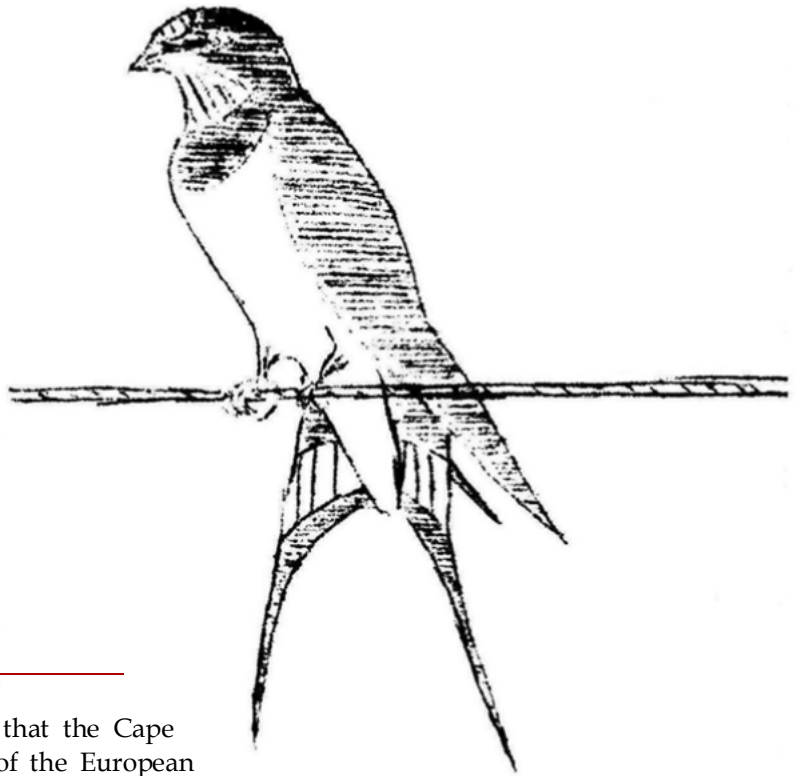


Rhodesian Ornithological Society Bulletin No. 24

April 1958

Editor: Dr. R.M. Harwin,
P.O. Box 647,
Gwelo.



European Swallows

Dr. Broekhuysen writes from Cape Town that the Cape Bird Club is trying to find out the origin of the European Swallows [Barn Swallow] which winter at the Cape. European Swallows have been trapped there this year and, in addition to being weighed and ringed, have been colour-marked with a dab of fuchsin on the breast. This shows up as a clear purple blob. If anybody should notice, or has noticed, a swallow with such an unusual colour on its breast, Dr. Broekhuysen would be glad to know about it. His address is Zoology Department, University of Cape Town.

An Osprey bathing

The following amusing account comes from Mr. Fletcher at Gatooma... On October 27th, 1957, I had the somewhat unusual experience of watching an Osprey have a bath. I was sitting under a bush by the side of a dam which I have visited regularly for some years past, waiting for something interesting to turn up – which it seldom fails to do – when the Osprey, which is usually to be seen there, flew down and settled in the shallow water near the opposite bank, at a point about 150 yards away from me. It then waded along for some 20 yards in water up to its belly, and, having apparently selected a suitable spot, it looked very carefully all round, for all the world like a shy young girl about to bathe in the nude, – in fact, it reminded me irresistibly of a picture called “September Morn”, which people of my age group will probably remember. Having satisfied itself that it was unobserved, it proceeded to have a good bath just like any small passerine in a pond. When finished, it flapped its wings just once before rising, to shake off the surplus water, and did not subsequently shake in the air, as the species does after diving for a fish.

I should be greatly interested to hear whether any of our members have observed this species or any other of the large raptors bathing in this manner.

Editor's note. *The Handbook of British Birds* says of the Osprey “After feeding, often flaps along surface, dragging feet in water to rid them of slime, and has been observed to duck head under water as well”, but this does not lead one to expect such a whole-hearted dip in the water as Mr. Fletcher witnessed.

Calling of the Cape Sea Eagle. It will be remembered that some time ago discussion went on at some length in this bulletin as to whether the African Fish-eagle calls on the wing or perched, or both.

Mr. Fletcher records that at Ngezi Dam on August 25th, 1957, he was able to observe the same pair of eagles calling repeatedly, both when soaring above the dam, and when perched together in the same large tree on the shore.

He adds "I was also able to ascertain the action of the bird's head and neck when the call is uttered on the wing, which corresponds to the throwing back of the head when perched. I was able to see that when flying normally the bird's neck is in such a position that the bill is pointed downwards towards the ground or water below. As the call is uttered, the neck is thrown forwards, so that the bill is pointing straight ahead.

ANGOLA PITTA Following the note in the November issue of the *Bulletin*, Mr. J.M.E. Took records that he and Mr. C.R. Vernon had an excellent view of one [African Pitta] on the 17th November 1957 in light thicket round a clump of rocks, about 13 miles south of Salisbury, just across the Hunyani.

WHITE STORKS Mrs. Attwell records being brought a ring from a dead White Stork found between Gatooma and Hartley. The ring was a Polish one, bearing the inscription "MUS. ZOOL. POLON. POLONIA VARSOVIA 527101". To date nothing further has been heard of the origin of the ringed bird.

WHITE-TAILED BUSH-LARK Field identification of the larks has always been rather difficult. Concerning this species Mr. C.K. Cooke remarks "It is not uncommon and seems to frequent the rough of the local golf courses. Like so many of our uncivilised birds the dead bird is often the only certain method of identification. The song is, however distinctive, as well as the white tail, which is more obvious than most characteristics." [*M. albicauda* occurs E Africa, Sudan. Ref here is probably to Monotonous Lark which may have been irruptive or more common than now, in the Bulawayo area [Cooke was at Khami at the time of this note]]

Nest Records

An official report will be issued by the organiser later this year, and in the meanwhile all contributors are asked to send him their 1957-58 records by the end of June, so as to include them in his annual report.

The "old guard" has been very active, but not many new contributors have come forward. In spite of this, 1957 was a record year, with 1800 cards covering over 2000 nests. We only hope that no cases of billharzia are going to be laid at the door of over-enthusiasm in recording the nests of waterbirds!

First place goes to Mr. C.K. Cooke of Khami Dam, and his son Peter. They contributed 214 cards and added several new species, including the Bush-larks. I. Cannell, another keen contributor from the Bulawayo area, has recorded several Layard's Bulbul [Dark-capped Bulbul] nests, parasitised by the Jacobin Cuckoo, with more than one parasite's egg. Previously there was only one such record from the whole of Africa, although the trait is well-known in the Jacobin Cuckoo in India.

Messrs' H.B. and A.N.B. Masterson have recorded an interesting series of nests of *Cisticola* spp. From Rusape, commenting on the differences in the nests. The usual ball-type nest with the entrance on the side is well-known, also the soda-water bottle type characteristic of *C. juncidis*. The former type is made by *C. abberans*, *C. tinniens*, *C. chiniana*, *C. rufilata*, *C. fulvicapilla* and *C. lais*. *C. brunnescens* [= *cinnamomeus*] builds a nest half-way between the two types, with the entrance small and very near the top, the grass in which it is built, projecting as a hood over the entrance. The nest of *C. natalensis* is of the ball type with a large side-entrance so that the eggs are only just below entrance level.

Finally, further observations on parasitic species are urgently wanted. Dr. Friedmann, having published books on the cuckoos and honeyguides, wants records for a similar work on the parasitic weavers. It is also important, with all parasitic species to have further records of eggs which are allowed to hatch, and the chicks to develop until the species can be recognised.

Donations to the Pan-African Ornithological Congress

Your society collected the sum of £96.27 towards the cost of running last year's Pan-African Ornithological Congress. Only £9.5.0 of this was acknowledged in the special "Congress" issue of the

Bokmakierie, as this had to go to press well before Congress actually took place. The full list is as follows:

British South Africa Company	£50. 0. 0.
Matabeleland Sub-branch (Proceeds of public showing of Mr. J. Wightman's films)	7. 17. 7.
R.G. Arkell	5. 0. 0.
Major L. Saunders	5. 0. 0.
Mrs. M.L. Snell	3. 3. 0.
P. Linton	3. 0. 0.
R.H.N. Smithers	2. 2. 0.
L.J. Warren	2. 2. 0.
Mrs. W.A. Pope	2. 2. 0.
C.P. Forder	2. 2. 0.
A.B. Fletcher	2. 2. 0.
Miss E.M. Nicholson	1. 10. 0.
P. Linton	1. 10. 0.
Mrs. A. Brownlee-Walker	1. 1. 0.
Miss I. Rorke	1. 0. 0.
N.A. Campbell	1. 0. 0.
Capt. R.H.R. Stevenson	1. 0. 0.
Mrs. Parkinson	1. 0. 0.
C.S. Mitchell	15. 0.
B. Radclyffe	10. 0.
A.B. Fletcher	10. 0.
H.M. Miles	10. 0.
D. Campbell	10. 0.
Miss E. Tyson	10. 0.
C.S. Mitchell	6. 0.
	£96. 2. 7.

Back-numbers of the Bulletin

The response to the appeal for back-numbers in the November issue was very poor. Surely someone has some odd back-numbers cluttering up some corner or other, which he or she doesn't want any more. If so send them in to the Editor, and, while you're about it, what about some notes for the next issue!