

# Rhodesian Ornithological Society Bulletin

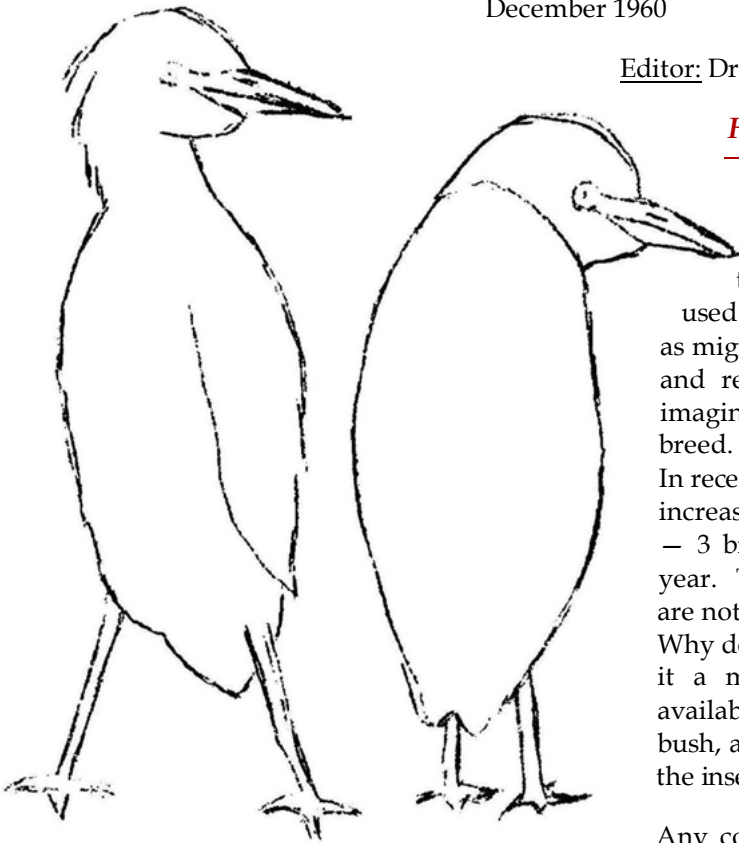
## No. 33

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

### *Habits of the Cattle Egret*



Mr. G.W. Parnell of Banket, who seems to have been responsible for a large part of this bulletin, writes, "At one time I always used to look upon Cattle Egrets and their cousins as migrants, in that they left at the end of the rains, and reappeared when the next rains set in. I imagined that they left for the larger rivers to breed.

In recent years they have taken to wintering here in increasing numbers; three or four years ago only 2 – 3 birds, building up to one or two dozen this year. They roost in the bulrushes on my dam, but are not breeding.

Why do they appear to be changing their habits? Is it a matter of food supply – an increase of available food, owing to the opening up of the bush, and an increase of dams and cattle to disturb the insects for them when grazing?"

Any comments on Mr. Parnell's observations and conjectures will be welcomed. The Cattle Egret is a species which is increasing in numbers, and spreading throughout its range, possibly for some such reason as that suggested, and this at least seems a good point to start from. In 1952 Mr. C.J. Skead published a detailed history of the Cattle Egret in the Eastern Cape Province, going back about 50 years, and showing how the species had increased in that time (and also how it had become increasingly more common in winter.)

There can be no doubt that this process is still continuing. It is now a matter of history that during the 1930's and 1940's the Cattle Egret crossed the Atlantic, and that it now breeds in both North and South America.

Are there any further observations on its increase and spread in the Federation? Even yet, it has not, as far as I know, been proved to breed in Southern Rhodesia.

### *The breeding of the Ground Hornbill*

When the late Dr. Gill first published his *First Guide to South African Birds* in 1936, he indicated that the nesting habits of the Ground Hornbill [Southern Ground-hornbill] were not well known, but at the same time quoted an account which seemed to point to their nesting being a communal affair, something like that of the Ostrich. Shortly afterwards Miss Courtenay-Latimer published detailed observations of a pair which bred in a hole in a tree. In this case, there was not the remotest suggestion of communal breeding; in fact, the nesting resembled in essentials that of the smaller hornbills, but with this important difference – that the hen was not walled in. In subsequent editions of Gill's book this was the account quoted, and communal nesting was not mentioned.

Concerning a nest which a neighbour of his has recently found, Mr. Parnell writes, "This nest is in a hole in the rocks on a kopje, and consists of some dry leaves at the bottom of the hole, and contained

one egg and one chick, which my friend describes as being quite the most hideous thing of its kind that he has ever come across.

The female is not walled up, and I gather that she is quite pugnacious when the site is approached, and that two or three other adults hang around the vicinity."

Nesting in rocks in other parts of Africa is mentioned by both Bannerman (for the related species *Bucorvus abyssinicus*) [Abyssinian Ground-hornbill] and Mackworth-Praed and Grant. I think this is understandable because hollow trees large enough for a bird the size of a Ground Hornbill to nest in must be quite hard to come by. But is there anything to the communal nesting story? Perhaps the explanation is that other members of the flock help to feed the sitting bird and chick, thus accounting for the two or three spare adults mentioned by Mr. Parnell. Can any reader throw any light on this? Unfortunately, in a subsequent letter, Mr. Parnell has informed me that the above-mentioned chick has disappeared. The local Africans' opinion is that the parents have moved it because of the interference caused by his neighbour's observations. Mr. Parnell, on the other hand thinks it has come to a sticky end at the hands of a predator such as a genet.

***YELLOW FLYCATCHER (Chloropeta natalensis). As this is a bird not often observed, the following notes made at Inyanga by Mrs. Snell might be of some interest***

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Today I was watching a pair of Yellow Flycatchers in the upper valley of the Gairezi at about 5000 feet. I see that the Southern Rhodesian check list and the new edition of *Roberts* both call this bird a warbler now [Dark-capped Yellow Warbler]. Admittedly it lives in reeds and makes a warbler-like sound, but I can hardly imagine anything more flycatcher-like than its appearance as I saw it today, when it frequently raised its head feathers into a crest, a habit not mentioned in *Roberts'* description. It also slightly fanned its tail, but this was not so marked as the raising of the little "crest".

***Next, two more short notes from the hand of Mr. Parnell, written on the 7<sup>th</sup> November***

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***BUTTONQUAIL*** About a fortnight ago I nearly ran down a button quail [Kurrichane Buttonquail] followed by two chicks, on the tar mat going to Banket. The chicks froze on the tar and I picked them up. They are the oddest little creatures, hardly larger than a big bumble bee.

It would appear that these birds have a very long breeding season, as I have once before seen a bird with young, of much the same size — at the end of April or beginning of May.

***PENNANT-WINGED NIGHTJAR*** I watched a Pennant-winged Nightjar in my car lights a few nights ago. He raised his wings above his back and vibrated them so that the pennants fluttered like flags in a breeze (it was a still night). A little way off a bird with no pennants was sitting; the male repeated the performance several times, presumably it is a mating action.

***THE SOUTHERN RHODESIAN WILD LIFE CONSERVATION ACT, 1960, AS IT AFFECTS ORNITHOLOGISTS***

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R.C. Knight, B. Comm, LL.B.

The Wild Life Conservation Act (No. 5/1960) passed through the Legislative Assembly earlier this year. In terms of Section 1 of the Act, it is to come into operation on such date as the Governor may declare, and it is understood that the Act will, in fact, come into operation on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1961.

It is not the intention of this article to discuss the provisions of the Act in full, but only to draw the attention of members of the Rhodesian Ornithological Society to the provisions which will affect them in their ornithological activities.

In view of the importance of the Act, however, there are bound to be members who will wish to study it in more detail. These members can obtain copies from the Federal Printing and Stationery Department at a cost of 4/ — each.

### **General Remarks.**

The Act should prove to be an extremely powerful weapon in the hands of those fighting for the conservation of the wild life of the Colony. It has been drafted in the light of the experience of the Southern Rhodesia Game Department, but also that of neighbouring territories such as Tanganyika, Northern Rhodesia and South Africa. Before submission to the Legislative Assembly, the draft Bill was examined by interested bodies, such as the Wild Life Protection Society, and the ROS. The ROS formed a special subcommittee to examine and comment on the Bill, and it is pleasing to know that the Government adopted all the recommendations made by the subcommittee. Such steps by the Government deserve the highest praise.

The Act is divided into nine parts, dealing with Game Reserves; Protected Animals – Royal Game; Hunting of Animals; Wild Birds; Export to and Import from Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland of Animals, etc.; Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn; Government trophies; Evidence, Prevention and Detection of Offences, etc.; and a General Section. In addition, there is a Preliminary Section.

These Parts will be briefly discussed, *seriatim*, insofar as they are likely to affect members, but before proceeding to discuss the main Parts, the following important definitions, which appear in the Preliminary Section should be noted: “*Animal*” means any kind of vertebrate animal, and the eggs and young thereof other than domestic animals and fish. It will be noticed that this definition includes birds as “animals”.

“*Capture*” includes any act immediately directed at the taking of any animal and the taking of nest, eggs or young of any animal.

“*Hunt*” means –

- (a) kill, injure, shoot at, follow or search for;
- (b) wilfully disturb or molest by any method; or
- (c) lie in wait for, with intent to kill, injure or shoot at; and “*hunting*” has a like meaning.

“*Wild Bird*” means any bird which occurs in the wild state, but does not include any such bird which has been bred in captivity.

### **Part I**

Part I of the Act deals with Game Reserves, Private Game Reserves, Non-Hunting Areas and Controlled Hunting Areas. The difference between those classes of area lies mainly in the conditions under which hunting is permitted therein. For example, no person may hunt in a Game Reserve without a permit issued by the responsible Minister, while in a Non-Hunting Area, no person may hunt without a Permit issued by the Director of Wild Life Conservation, to be appointed under the Act.

For finer details regarding the areas of the various Game Reserves etc. in the Colony, readers are referred to the First and Second Schedules of the Act, but, briefly, no birds may be hunted in the Lake Alice Game Reserve, the Upper and Lower Umgusa Dam Reserves, the Khami Dam Reserve, or the Urungwe, Chizarira or Matusadona Non-hunting Areas (unless, of course, one is in possession of the appropriate Permit). National Parks are governed by different legislation, and no hunting may be done therein.

Heavy penalties are provided for contravention of the provisions of this Part.

### **Part II**

This Part lays down that certain animals are “Royal Game” and may not be hunted or captured anywhere in the Colony, unless a certain area is specified, without the permission of the Minister.

**The following birds are specified in Schedule 3 (Class B) as being Royal Game throughout the Colony:**

The Dabchick [Little Grebe]	– <i>Podiceps ruficollis</i>
All the Pelicans	– Family Pelecanidae
All the Herons, Egrets and Bitterns	– Family Ardeidae
The Hamerkop	– <i>Scopus umbretta</i>
The Whale-headed Stork [Shoebill]	– <i>Balaeniceps rex</i>
All the Storks (including Wood Ibises)	– Family Ciconiidae
All the Ibises and Spoonbills	– Family Threskiornithidae
All the Flamingos	– Family Phoenicopteridae
The Pygmy Goose [African Pygmy-goose]	– <i>Nettapus auritus</i>

The Secretarybird	– <i>Sagittarius serpentarius</i>
All the Vultures	– Family Aegypiidae
Verreaux’s Eagle	– <i>Aquila verreauxi</i>
The Bateleur Eagle	– <i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>
The Lammergeier Eagle	– <i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>
The Osprey	– <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
The Peters’ Finfoot [African Finfoot]	– <i>Podica senegalensis</i>
All the Jacanas	– Family Jacanidae
All the Cranes	– Family Gruidae
All the Bustards and Korhaans	– Family Otididae
All the Plovers	– Family Charadriidae
All the Stilts and Avocets	– Family Recurvirostridae
All the Coursers and Pratincoles	– Family Glareolidae
All the Dikkops [Thick-knees]	– Family Burhinidae
All the Rollers	– Family Coraciidae
All the Bee-eaters	– Family Meropidae
The Ground Hornbill [Southern Ground-hornbill]	– <i>Bucorvus leadbeateri</i>
The Barn Owl and African Grass-owl	– Family Tytonidae
All the Owls and Owlets	– Family Strigidae
All the Nightjars	– Family Caprimulgidae
The Narina Trogon	– <i>Apaloderma narina</i>
The East African Pitta	– <i>Pitta angolensis</i>
The African Paradise-flycatcher	– <i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>
The Crimson-breasted Shrike	– <i>Laniarius atrococcineus</i>

The penalty for contravening the provisions of this Part of the Act in respect of the above-mentioned birds is a maximum fine of £100 and/or six months’ imprisonment.

### **Part III**

Part III of the Act deals with the hunting of Animals. “Save as otherwise specially provided in this Act, no person shall hunt or capture any animal specified in the Fourth schedule except under and in accordance with the terms and conditions of a Licence issued or a Permit granted under the provisions of this Act” (Section 16 (1)).

#### **Part A of the Fourth Schedule specifies the following birds:**

<u>Birds</u>	<u>Number that may be hunted</u>
1. Ducks and Teal, including the genera <i>Dendrocygna</i> , <i>Anas</i> , <i>Aythya</i> , <i>Oxyura</i> and <i>Thalassornis</i> .	Unlimited
2. Geese, including the genera <i>Alopochen</i> , <i>Sarkidiornis</i> and <i>Plectropterus</i> , but excluding the African Pygmy-goose of the genus <i>Nettapus</i>	Unlimited
3. Snipe, including the genera <i>Gallinago</i> and <i>Rostratula</i>	Unlimited
4. Francolin of the genus <i>Francolinus</i>	Unlimited
5. Guineafowl, including the genera <i>Numida</i> and <i>Guttera</i>	Unlimited
6. Sandgrouse of the genus <i>Pterocles</i>	Unlimited
7. Quails, including the genera <i>Coturnix</i> and <i>Turnix</i>	Unlimited

A Bird Licence (see below) is required to hunt the above, but no limit is placed on the number that may be hunted.

#### **The Act goes on to provide that the following licences may be issued:**

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|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| (a) a bird licence         | (c) a supplementary game licence |
| (b) a general game licence | (d) a landholder’s game licence. |

Of these, classes (b) and (c) may only be issued in respect of animals other than birds, but classes (a) and (d) may be issued in respect of birds.

A **Bird Licence** entitles the holder to hunt the birds specified in Part A of the Fourth Schedule (*supra*) in the numbers specified, and is valid for one year from the date of issue. No person may hold more than one bird licence.

A **Landholder's Game Licence** can be issued to certain classes of person only (specified in Section 21 (1) of the Act) such as owners of private land in the Colony, who have been resident in the Colony for a period of twelve months before the date of application for a licence. For details of other classes of person, readers are referred to the Act. This licence is only issued in respect of the land owned or occupied by the applicant, or the land on which the applicant is in the bona fide employment of the owner or occupier, and entitles the holder to hunt, on the specified land, the animals specified in the Fifth Schedule (subject to a maximum number) and the birds specified in Part A of the Fourth Schedule (*supra*). Such a licence is only valid until the 31<sup>st</sup> December next, in the year in which it is issued, although a licence may be obtained in the December of any one year in respect of the next succeeding year.

**Both Bird and Landholder's Licences** are issued by the Licencing Officers on payment of the following fees, which differ, it will be noted, in the case of persons resident in the Colony and those persons not so resident:

Bird Licence	Resident	£2
	Non-Resident	£5
Landholder's Game Licence		£2

The meaning of the word "**resident**" is defined in Section 23(3)

Licences may not be transferred to any person by the holder, and may not be used by any person other than the holder, except that a landholder's licence may be used by the spouse and children under 18 of the holder.

**Provision is made in the Act for the Amendment of the Fourth and Fifth Schedules**, the declaration of an open season for any game animals, the licensing of professional guides, the issue of a Governor's Licence for the supply of food in a national emergency, or for complementary purposes, and for disqualification of certain persons for the grant of a licence.

**The Minister is authorised to issue permits to enable the holders to kill or capture any animal** or to take the eggs of any bird, whether specified in any Schedule or not, for educational or scientific research purposes, the provision of specimens for Museums etc., the control of disease, in the interests of public safety or the Conservation, Management, Control or Utilization of Wild Life.

(This should be enough to brood over for the present. The remainder of Part III, and Parts IV to VIII will be dealt with in the next *Bulletin*).

### **PUBLICATIONS**

Have you got a copy of that valuable publication *A Check list of the birds of Southern Rhodesia*, and if not, why not?

No member of the Society should be without this work, for no person taking the slightest interest in birds in the Colony can afford to be without it.

Copies are available from most booksellers throughout the Federation at a price of 30/- . GET YOURS NOW!

If you think the above notice about the Check List doesn't apply to you, – are you sure?

Have you got your copy of the "Addendum" to the Check List?

All owners of the check list should have a copy of the "Addendum" to keep themselves right up to date.

Copies of the "Addendum" can be obtained from the Secretary, R.C. Knight Esq., P.O. Box 1108, Salisbury for only 2/- each, post free.

### **HELP! HELP! HELP!**

Copies of the following back-numbers of the *Bulletin* are urgently required NOW for submission to the Public Library, Bulawayo, in terms of the Printed Publications Act:

Nos. 1 to 17, 22 and 23.

We are also trying to provide the Percy Fitzpatrick Institute with a complete set of back-numbers of the *Bulletin*.

Turn out all your old copies and send them to R.C. Knight, P.O. Box 1108, Salisbury, as soon as possible please!