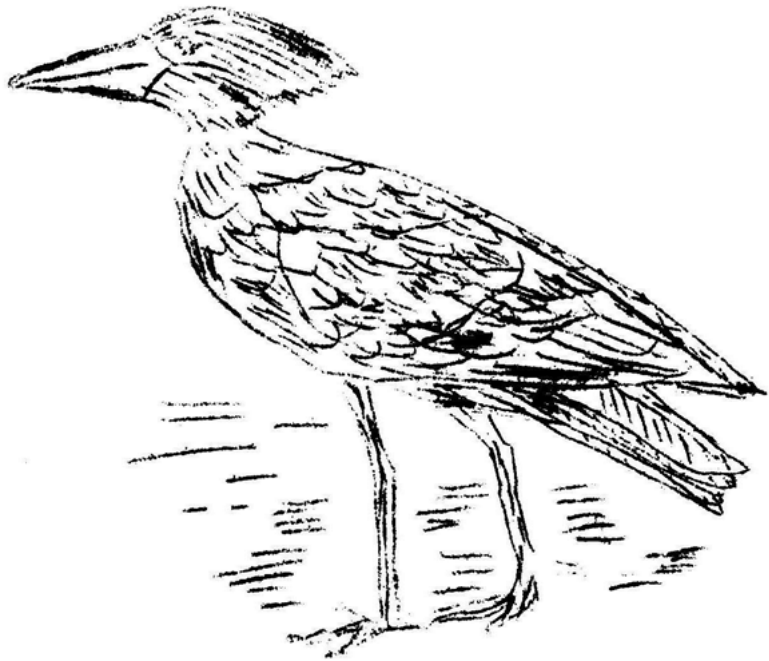


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Fish-eagles again

Major Trollope has again written about African Fish-eagles.

This time commenting on Mr. Jubb's note in *Bulletin* No. 18, in which Mr. Jubb says

"The Fish-eagle then soared high and gave its characteristic call", he says "I know how difficult it is to substantiate a negative observation, but my own experience in some 17 years' birdwatching on the Zambezi is that I have never seen the fish-eagle giving tongue while on the wing. I have always seen him doing so while perched on a tree, when he throws his head right back on to his shoulders and screams upward – a very difficult evolution to be carried out while flying, but not, of course, impossible".

Note: I have once heard the fish-eagle screaming while in flight – in February 1951 at Mtunzini in Zululand. On that occasion a pair of birds was involved, and the call was used during display, but whether one or both birds was calling or whether the bird put its head back on its shoulders to call, I cannot say. I would be interested to hear what the experience of other ROS members has been. Editor.

Some interesting observations have come from Mr. Carl Vernon, c/o P.O. Karoi, through Mr. Brewer of the Umtali High School where Mr. Vernon was formerly a pupil. He has started to compile a list of native names for birds, and would welcome contributions to it. His records are: –

1). African Golden Oriole. Found nesting at Karoi on 6th November 1955 in a msasa tree in woodland 100 yards from a well-used road. The nest was about 10 feet up, slung between the branched of a thin fork facing south. The nest was like an enlarged Black-headed Bulbul's [Dark-capped Bulbul], about 5" deep, and 5" across the mouth of the cup. It was made of yellow grass and contained two young with an early growth of fluffy feathers.

The parents were near at hand, and were identified through binoculars by not having a black head like the Black-headed, or black wing-tips like the European Oriole. The beak and eyes appeared darker than in *Roberts*.

Query – Is it common for it to nest in Rhodesia?

2). White-winged Tern. Three seen at Karoi Dam, first in September 1955 (when they were very shy, and could not be identified), and again on November 5th. This time identified with binoculars when perched. Wings long and pointed. In flight in September they seemed to have mottled underwings and may have been in breeding plumage.

Query – Is it normally found in Rhodesia and how long will it stay?

3). and 4). Also identified near Karoi – Lesser Jacana and Grey-throated Cuckoo Shrike [White-breasted Cuckooshrike].

Editor's comment. As far as the Lake Tern is concerned, I have not met with it in Rhodesia, but found it very common in the Transvaal, where it occurs in flocks on mine dams and sewage farms. Unlike marine terns, it feeds largely on flying insects; hence its preference for such situations; and it sometimes hunts over dry land. It arrives in September and departs again in April, stragglers staying until early May. From February onwards, they begin to assume breeding plumage, in which the most conspicuous feature is the white tail. (The wings, in spite of its name, are not wholly white). Later, the black underparts become obvious.

The White-winged Lake and Whiskered Terns are indistinguishable in the field in non-breeding plumage, but it should be remembered that the latter is resident in Africa and would most likely be breeding during the time the former is here.

D.A. Byrom has an unusual record of winter breeding by the Blacksmith Plover [Blacksmith Lapwing]: He writes:—

At Rainham Dam on the 9th June 1955, I was recording the contents of half a dozen nests of the African Coot [Red-knobbed Coot], when I saw a pair of Blacksmith Plovers becoming quite agitated as I neared the shore. I watched them for a while, and realised there was a nest in the area. I waited and soon marked a spot where I thought a nest was likely, and soon found the eggs. They were in a hoof-print near the water's edge, greenish in colour, with black markings.

Mr. Miles informs me that this is the first time this species has been recorded (in Rhodesia at least) breeding in June, as the usual time is mid- July and early August. The eggs were taken, and in July Mr. Bloomfield and Mr. Miller found a second nest, with two eggs, about 20 yards from the original one.

A.B. Fletcher has a query about the Willow Warbler. He writes:—

I should be interested to know the observations of other members re the sighting of the Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*) in this country. In my past experience I have always noticed it singing when it first arrives and for several weeks afterwards, usually until about mid-December.

Now, however, (March) a bird of this species has started singing constantly near my house, and has been doing so for the past week — in the intervals between rainstorms. It seems possible that this has been brought on by the bird getting into breeding condition before migrating, but I have never known it before, though the bird is very common in the area just outside Gatooma, where I lived for the past 10 years.

Mr. Fletcher also mentions, concerning the incident involving the African Fish-eagle which be recorded in *Bulletin* No. 17, that a pair of Fish-eagles is often to be seen at the dam mentioned, but that he has never again seen any attack on a bird, in spite of their being so numerous, and there having been for a long time a Red-billed Teal which cannot fly — probably with a broken wing.

The Editor wishes to thank all those members who responded to the appeal for notes made in the last issue of the *Bulletin*. In particular he wishes to draw members' attention to all the queries that have been raised. What about letting us have your opinions or similar experiences? Or if you have any queries of your own I would be only too glad to publish them and try to get the answer.