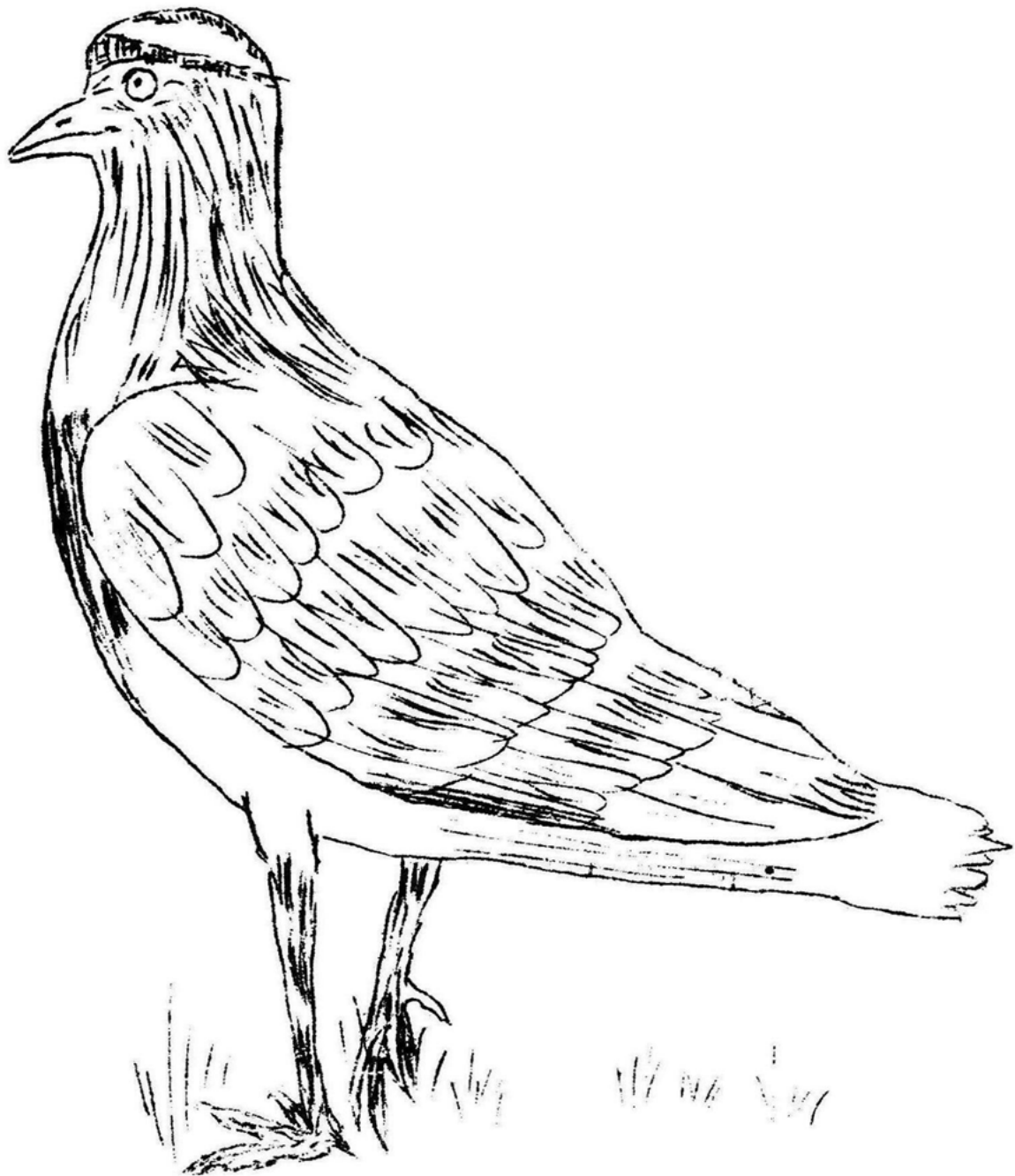


Rhodesian Ornithological Society Bulletin  
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### *Society has new Chairman*

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At a recent meeting of the executive committee Mr. J.M.E. Took tendered his resignation as Chairman of the Society, consequent upon his appointment as Deputy High Commissioner for the Federation in Nigeria. The committee, whilst expressing its regret at this news from the point of view of the Society, congratulated Mr. Took on his appointment.

Mr. R.C. Smith was unanimously elected as President and Chairman of the society, to hold office until the next Annual General Meeting in February 1961.

### *Mr. Took sent the following farewell message*

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I should be grateful if I may use the *Bulletin's* columns to tell members with regret, that I have to resign to office of President, to which I was kindly elected earlier this year. I have been posted to our High Commission in Lagos, and however novel the idea, I fear I cannot preside at that range. With the approval of the Committee I asked Mr. Roland Smith to take over my office until the next Annual General Meeting and Mr. Smith has agreed to do so.

If any members are visiting Nigeria during the next 18 months, or want any ornithological information, it will give me the greatest pleasure to help.

### *We also note that Mr. Took has not been slow off the mark in his new surroundings. A footnote to the above message reads*

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Palm Swifts [African Palm-swift] in plenty all round here, and another square-tailed, white-rumped species which looks to me like *A. affinis* [Little Swift]. Diderick Cuckoo calling and have seen Eurasian Curlew, Sanderling, etc. over the shore.

The committee has also, with deep regret, accepted the resignation of Mr. J.M. Paterson from the post of Hon. Ringing Organiser. Future correspondence in connection with ringing should be addressed to Mr. R.H.N. Smithers, P.O. Box 8540, Causeway.

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### *Swifts at Bapoma (south Macheke)*

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*Bulletin* No. 35 carried a note from Carl Vernon recording the Alpine Swift at Bapoma. A fuller account comes from Richard Brooke.

We discovered the Little Swift in numbers for the first time in our experience in Southern Rhodesia at Bapoma (south Macheke). On November 12<sup>th</sup> they were seen circling round high castle rocks where they were nest-building under the eaves and crevices of huge boulders which formed the castle. Priest (1934), *The birds of Southern Rhodesia* II, 459.

Carl Vernon, J. Hopkinson and Richard Brooke decided to visit Bapoma farm on 14<sup>th</sup> October 1960 to see if the Little Swifts *Apus affinis*, were still breeding on the kopjie. We found that they were - in two cracks running up into a vast boulder. The weather was drizzly, and there was a horde of flying termites emerging, on which a mixed flock of swifts was feeding. It is always difficult to count swifts, but we estimated that there were 30 Little Swifts (the breeding population), 30 European Swifts [Common Swift] *A. apus*, 10 Brown Swifts [African Black Swift] *A. barbatus* (perhaps breeding) and 5 Alpine Swifts *A. melba*. It was an exhilarating experience to have these great swifts dashing past one at eye level among the tops of the rocks. I revisited the area on 16<sup>th</sup> January 1961 and found the Little Swifts still breeding and a few Brown Swifts still around. On both occasions a Lanner Falcon left the

kopjie soon after our arrival. D. Rushworth informs me that the Lanner is an occasional predator of swifts.

The National Museum in Bulawayo possesses a specimen of the Alpine Swift which was found dead at Beitbridge in, I think, 1959.

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*Fish-eagle. An account of a bold African Fish-eagle comes from J.R. Little in Blantyre, who writes*

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During a very pleasant weekend in September, spent at the Glengeary Hotel on the shores of Cape Maclear, I was delighted to be able to witness and film an interesting performance by a Fish Eagle.

It started with a yarn in the bar one evening, when the proprietor, Bob Kennedy, told us he had taught a wild Fish Eagle to come when called and take a fish off the front of his boat. At his suggestion I went with him in his 12 foot runabout at 10 a.m. on a breezy day, to one of the large islands.

There were plenty of Fish Eagles in sight and many nests among the trees on the steep banks. We cruised along past about a dozen of the perched birds, and Bob then slowed down and stood up, waving a dead fish about 9 inches long in the air, and whistled, almost as though he was calling a dog. At first there was no apparent reaction, and I was told he was still looking for the right bird. At this stage I was convinced that the 'bar story' was not going to work, but then Bob shouted, "That's him!" and the eagle rose from its nest while Bob placed the fish on the foredeck. The bird swooped down in a long glide, coming in from behind us, and with a terrific thud grabbed the fish and flew to a tree at the water's edge, where it perched for a while, before flying to the nest.

A number of other Fish Eagles watched all this but took no further action when a second fish was waved and the calling repeated. We cruised around slowly for about twenty minutes until we could see that our bold eagle had finished his meal, and then Bob staged a repeat performance. This time I was kneeling up in the boat about six feet from the fish, with camera poised, and he came in straight from the front, till he blotted out my viewfinder and whizzed past with his prize, a few inches to my left.

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Bob Kennedy tells me he has spent more than a year feeding this bird fish; at first thrown in far from the boat and gradually coming closer, till it eventually took fish from the prow of the boat.

My film is not yet processed, but even if it is a complete failure the experience was tremendous, and again, even if it is good I am still going back for another shot.

*Lesser Stripe-breasted Swallow*

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In earlier editions of Gill's *First guide to South African birds*, you will find the statement that this species, in contrast to its larger relative, occasionally nests in colonies.

I have never observed this, but recently in the Belingwe Reserve, came across nine pairs of Lesser Striped Swallows nesting under the same bridge. The bridge had nine arches; one was unoccupied, one had two nests, and the other seven had one nest each.

Have any members come across Lesser Striped Swallow breeding in colonies, or at least in close association with one another?

(As a postscript to the above note I visited the bridge again 3 weeks later. The river was in flood and the nests could not be inspected, but at least one seemed to have been taken over by White-rumped Swifts).

### *Bird Life at Kariba - Mr. G.W. Parnell writes*

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Having just got back from a fishing trip to Kariba, the following may be of interest. A Yellow-billed Kite was picking up fish-guts thrown into the water from a native netters' camp, out of the water. On one occasion it attempted to pick up one of my companion's floats. Another surprising this was to hear an African Fish-eagle's call - obviously in flight - at about 10 p.m. (there was a full moon).

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At the Sanyati West bush-clearing, Goliath Herons were plentiful and I saw one pair standing on what appeared to be a nest in the top of a half-submerged tree, just off the bush clearing. Unfortunately, I could not get the thirty foot boat near enough to investigate whether there were any eggs. African Darters and Reed Cormorants were very numerous - at times in flocks of up to 20 birds and they had obviously nested in similar trees to the Goliath Herons off the bush clearing. I saw a few Purple Herons and Grey Herons, and the Large White Heron [Great Egret] was fairly common; but none compared to the Goliath in numbers.

In places, what I took to be (basing my identification on their obvious hawking of insects over the water) White-winged Terns in non-breeding dress were in hundreds, walking about on patches of Kariba weed and perched on the branches of submerging trees. From a distance these trees looked like a wild white *Bauhinia* in flower.

Amongst all these aquatic birds it was somewhat startling when we tied up one night in the lee of a tiny island of high ground off the bush clearing (which must be ten to twelve miles across and devoid of trees) to find a flight of helmet shrikes [White-crested Helmet-shrike] and one of wood-hoopoes [Green Wood-hoopoe]; a Scarlet-chested Sunbird, some glossy starlings and a pair of Common Scimitarbills; also a few Helmeted Guineafowl.

The island was only a few hundred yards or so wide, and besides the birds, harboured eight warthog. Another surprise was to see, next morning, a couple of kudu cows enter the water from the mainland bush clearing, and swim several hundred yards to the island to browse on the shooting trees.

### *Small goshawks and sparrowhawks*

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Following upon his short note about these birds which appeared in *Bulletin* 35, Carl Vernon has drawn up a tabular key to their identification, which appears overleaf.

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### **A new name for the *Bulletin***

The suggestion has been made that, along with the new format and other projected improvements in the *Bulletin*, it should be renamed after a well-known Rhodesian bird. A subcommittee consisting of the chairman, secretary and editor has drawn up a short list, which is published here for information and comments, and I should be grateful if members would let either the Hon. Secretary or myself know their reactions and comments before the 20<sup>th</sup> February 1962. Note that as *The Bateleur* and *The Babbler* had already been used for other publications they are not considered.

The Fish Eagle	The Honeyguide	The Hamerkop
The Oriole	The Saddlebill	The Didric
The Crested Guineafowl	The Loerie	The Crowned Crane
The Jacana	The Lily Trotter	The Roller

## Identification key to small raptors

Species	Back	Rump	Throat, Chest & Belly	Juvenile	Other Data
Ovambo Sparrowhawk	Darker than Gabar	Unmarked	Barred grey-brown on white, wide at the belly, becoming thinner and narrower under throat, until almost grey	Back – brown streaked on the head Belly – indistinctly barred	Largest, with a long tail and very swift flight. Rare melanistic phase
Gabar Goshawk	Grey back	White bar	Light grey throat. Evenly and widely barred with grey on white	As for Ovambo except it has white tail-coverts	Fairly frequent melanistic phase. Covers its nest with cobwebs & lays plain eggs
Little Banded Goshawk [Shikra]	Light grey	Unmarked	White chest with even fairly wide bars of light rusty brown	As for adult but much darker & with streaks on the head	Lines its nest with lichen
Little Sparrowhawk	Darkest on the back	White tail coverts, i.e. Small bar	Barred evenly and narrowly with grey	Back – light brown Chest – spotted Throat – streaked Belly – barred	Has no nest lining & lays plain white eggs
Lizard Buzzard	Grey back	White bar	Grey with black line Down from bill. Evenly barred	As for the adult but paler and lacks throat streak	Lines nest with lichens

### *Summer School for ornithology*

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The Percy Fitzpatrick Institute in African Ornithology in co-operation with the Department of Extra-mural Studies of the University of Cape Town is arranging a summer school in ornithology from 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> February 1962. The object of the course is to give amateur ornithologists and birdwatchers some idea of the scientific background of their hobby.

The school will comprise lectures in the morning given by the institute staff, assisted by outside experts; and in the afternoons, visits to suitable areas near Cape Town where practical work can be observed or carried out, and some instruction in the preparation and use of bird skins.

The subjects covered by the lectures will include migration and breeding cycle, behaviour, life history studies, systematics and geographical and ecological distribution.

The period of the school will coincide with the first week of the annual Summer School of the University, which will run from 5<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> February. It will not be possible for those attending the course in ornithology to attend other lectures during that week, but in case members of the family accompanying the student may be interested in any of the other courses, their subjects are given here: electronics, economics, philosophy, literature and music.

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Social functions will be arranged and there will be library and recreational facilities.

Further details of the other courses may be obtained from the Department of Extra-mural Studies, University of Cape Town, Orange Street, Cape Town. Telephone 41-2594/5.

By arrangement with the university a limited amount of accommodation will be available in the university residences at a charge of R1.85 per day, including meals.

The cost of registration for the course on ornithology will be approximately R8.00. Those 21 and under, R1.50. Students, scholars and UCT staff free, accommodation permitting.

Further particulars may be obtained from: The Director, Percy Fitzpatrick Institute of African Ornithology, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch, telephone 69-5612.

### *Calling all members*

Many members will have heard, or heard of, the recording of the songs of African birds made by Mr. Miles North in Kenya, and published by the Laboratory of Ornithology in Cornell University.

This record, a 33 rpm 18" record, is the only one on the market as far as we are aware, relating to African birds, and some two-thirds of the birds heard on it are found in Rhodesia. The recording is remarkable for its clarity and is accompanied by an excellent commentary.

Members who wish to obtain this record are advised that Studio Four, Angwa Street, Salisbury, has agreed to import a limited number of records and these should arrive about the middle of December. They will be sold at the price of £3.18.0 each, post free in the Federation and members requiring the record should contact Studio IV direct.

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It is understood that if the record is not in stock at the time the order is received, Studio IV will order copies if so requested. The record takes at least two months to arrive from the United States.

NOTE: to the best of our knowledge and belief all the above facts are correct; the Society and its officers cannot accept any responsibility for orders for records.

### *Nest Record Cards*

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A new batch of nest record cards is shortly to be printed and the SAOS council invites comments from members on the format, and particularly suggestions as to their improvement *without altering the size*. Please send in your suggestions to Mr. C. Vernon as soon as possible.

Note also that as from the beginning of 1962 the address of Mr. Vernon: the Hon. Nest Record Organiser, will be c/o P.O. Box 240, Bulawayo.

### *Game laws*

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Carl Vernon writes that he has had grumbles from several members about the new Wild Life Conservation Act. No doubt they have found that it cramps their style even for examining and recording nests. If you do have any grievances please put them down in writing and send them to either the Hon. Secretary at P.O. Box 1108, Salisbury, or to Mr. Vernon or Mr. M.P.S. Irwin at the National Museum, P.O. Box 240, Bulawayo. Unless we have specific grievances in writing it is impossible to put the case to the Game Department.

Just to remind members, a very comprehensive summary of the Act as it affects ornithologists, appeared in *Bulletins* Nos. 33 and 34.

***Wanted:*** has anybody a copy of Capt. Priest's book *Eggs of birds breeding in Southern Africa*, which they wish to sell?

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If so please get in touch with Mrs. Laura Boswell, 4 Vancouver Road, Braeside, Salisbury, who wishes to acquire a copy.

***Contributions to the Bulletin*** should be sent to the Hon. Editor: Dr. R.M. Harwin, P.O. Box 647, Gwelo, Southern Rhodesia.