

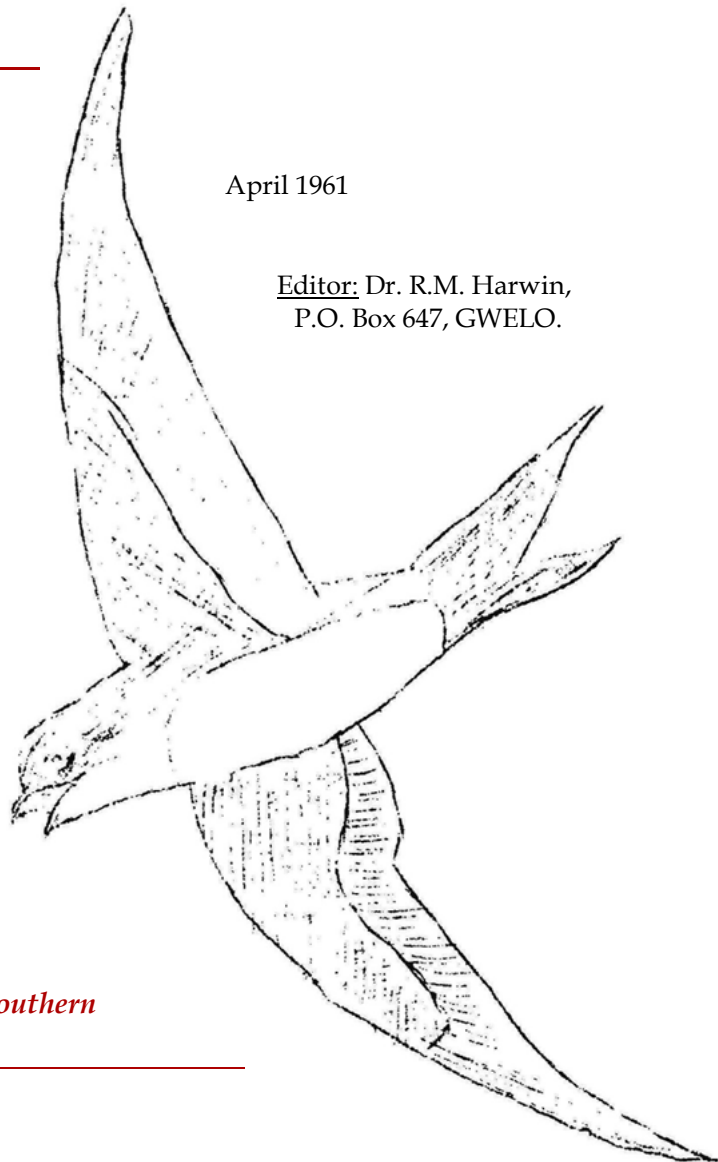
# Rhodesian Ornithological Society Bulletin

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P.O. Box 647, GWELO.



### *The Alpine Swift in Southern Rhodesia*

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First, a short note by Mr. J.M.E. Took:

This species (*Apus melba*) does not appear in the Southern Rhodesian Check List, as no specimen has yet been obtained within the Colony's borders; but, as the authors of the "Additions and Corrections" point out at page 254, it might occur anywhere in the territory, and is well worth looking for. It is the sort of bird which is hard to mistake and I was fortunate enough to see one at Inyanga on the Matendere river — about 6500 feet — on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1959.

I watched a flock of about 200 swifts (*A. apus* or *A. barbatus*) [African Black Swift is more probable for early October] come down to drink in their spectacular way while I was tying on a fly by the river. They came past very close, one after the other, and then came one with a striking pure white belly. The white underside was broken about the breast by a dark bar or collar, and then continued white up under the throat. One may say it recalled a large Banded Sand Martin (*Riparia cincta*). I had excellent views of it when it circled and came past a second time, again displaying its conspicuous white underparts.

To Mr. Took's record, I should like to add one of my own — of five Alpine Swifts frolicking over Umfasimete kopjie, a small isolated hill about twelve miles north of Bulawayo on the 5<sup>th</sup> September 1954. I had previously got to know the species in the Magaliesberg, and was at the time unaware that it had not been obtained in Southern Rhodesia. With its white throat and belly, as described by Mr. Took, it is one of the few swifts which are unmistakable. I should be interested to know of any other visual records of the species.

*Diderick Cuckoo. Mrs. Diana Wheeler sends the following note:*

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On January 9<sup>th</sup>, when on a visit to the Gairezi River Valley at Inyanga, the plaintive “deea—deea—deea’ of a female Diderick Cuckoo was heard. The bird was located in a small scrubby tree on the side of a hill. Almost immediately a male alighted beside her with a caterpillar dangling from his mouth. He spread his tail, bowed three or four times, then turned sideways and presented his delicacy to the female. Eight caterpillars were brought in almost as many minutes and each time the bowing was ceremoniously performed.

I am still not quite sure whether the female was in fact a female, or whether it was a fledgling. But the male’s behaviour certainly suggested courtship display.

Note: Mrs. Wheeler’s description clearly points to this being a case of courtship feeding, but perhaps it is not out of place to point out here that the Diderick Cuckoo is rather unusual in that the male is known to feed fledglings of its own species.

*Southern Ground-hornbill*

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Following on his notes on the nesting of this bird in *Bulletin* No. 33, Mr. G.W. Parnell writes that he has been informed by a schoolboy from Plumtree that he has found several Ground-hornbill nests in that area, built of sticks and situated in the top of flat thorn trees “after the fashion of the Secretary Bird”. He goes on, “It rather looks as if their nesting habits are dictated by force of circumstances. No rocks and no hollow trees and they have to build.”

Has any member any information on this alleged habit of the Ground-hornbill? If it does use such stick-nests, does it build them itself, or take over old nests of birds of prey?

*The Southern Rhodesian Wild Life Conservation Act, 1960, as it affects ornithologists – part II*

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

(Part I of this article dealt with Sections 1 to 34 of the Act.)

**Section 35** allows the Director of Wild Life and Conservation to issue permits to authorize the killing or capture of animals for various specified purposes, and the killing, capture, sale or purchase of wild birds (other than those specified in the Third Schedule (see *Bulletin* No. 33) or the Twelfth Schedule (*infra*) for confinement in aviaries for display or breeding purposes, scientific or educational purposes, or other purposes approved by the Minister, or for the collection, sale or purchase of the eggs of any such birds for any such purpose. The director may grant permits for the sale or purchase of wild birds or the eggs of wild birds specified in the Twelfth Schedule for any purpose, and for the inspection, examination and photographing of wild birds and the eggs and nest thereof. Regulations governing the conditions or issue of such permits are expected to be promulgated shortly.

**The Twelfth Schedule specifies the following as “Unprotected Wild Birds”**

White-breasted Cormorant	– <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Reed Cormorant	– <i>Phalacrocorax africanus</i>
African Darter	– <i>Anhinga anhinga</i>
Rock Pigeon [Speckled Pigeon]	– <i>Columba guinea</i>
Red-eyed Dove	– <i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>
African Mourning Dove	– <i>Streptopelia decipiens</i>
Ring-necked Dove [Cape Turtle-dove]	– <i>Streptopelia capicola</i>
Laughing Dove	– <i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>
Namaqua Dove	– <i>Oena capensis</i>
Tambourine Dove	– <i>Turtur tympanistria</i>
Blue-spotted Wood-dove	– <i>Turtur afer</i>
Emerald-spotted Wood-dove	– <i>Turtur chalcospilos</i>
Speckled Coly (Speckled Mousebird)	– <i>Colius striatus</i>
Red-faced Coly (Red-faced Mousebird)	– <i>Colius indicus</i>
Layard’s Bulbul [Dark-capped Bulbul]	– <i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>
Fiscal Shrike [Common Fiscal]	– <i>Lanius collaris</i>

Pied Crow	– <i>Corvus albus</i>
Cape Rook [Cape Crow]	– <i>Corvus capensis</i>
White-necked Raven	– <i>Corvus albicollis</i>
House Sparrow	– <i>Passer domesticus</i>
Masked Weaver[Southern Masked-weaver]	– <i>Ploceus velatus</i>
Black-headed Weaver [Village Weaver]	– <i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>
Red-billed Quelea	– <i>Quelea quelea</i>
Mozambique Canary (Yellow-fronted Canary)	– <i>Serinus mozambicus</i>
Bully Canary [Brimstone Canary]	– <i>Serinus sulphuratus</i>
Streaky-headed Seedeater	– <i>Serinus gularis</i>
Mennell's Seedeater [Black-eared Seedeater]	– <i>Serinus mennelli</i>
Black-throated Canary	– <i>Serinus atrogularis</i>
Indian Mynah [Common Myna]	– <i>Acridotheres tristis</i>

The Act goes on to provide that the Minister may prohibit certain activities in certain areas, that in certain cases persons must keep registers of animals killed by them if required to do so by the conditions of their licences, that the loss or destruction of a register must be reported and that the owner or occupier of land may destroy on his land any animal causing damage to any livestock, crops, water installation or fence on such land, provided that no poisoned weapon, pitfall or wire snare may be used for such destruction, and provided also that where any Royal Game is destroyed in terms of this section (41), such destruction must be reported at the nearest convenient police station or native commissioner's office as soon as possible. The burden of proving that the destroyed animal was causing damage to livestock, crops etc., lies on the person who destroyed the animal. Similar provisions apply to the destruction of animals in self-defence, and of game animals by accident or in error.

**Section 45** of the Act provides that no person shall enter upon any land for the purpose of hunting or capturing any animal without the written permission of the owner or occupier of the land, or unless accompanied by the owner or occupier, and any person found on any land with, *inter alia*, a weapon, poisoned bait, bird-lime, net, trap, or snare, or with a dog, is deemed to have entered such land in contravention of this Section, unless he proves otherwise.

***Certain provisions regarding the conveyance of firearms along roads in the Colony follow.***

Owners of land granting permission to persons to hunt or capture game on their land must satisfy themselves that the person to whom they are granting such permission has a valid licence or permit. Persons who may give permission in respect of land are specified in Section 50 of the Act, and include, *inter alia*, in the case of private land, the registered owner, the lessee, or any person authorised by the owner.

**Section 51** specifies that only certain weapons may be used for hunting certain animals. As far as birds are concerned, only a smooth bore weapon, or rifle of a calibre of .23 of an inch (or 5.85 mm) or less may be used for birds specified in Part A of the Fourth Schedule (*supra*). A weapon firing more than one cartridge as a result of one pressure on the trigger may not be used. Dazzling lights may not be used to hunt or capture any game animal, and these may not in any event, be hunted at night, except under special circumstances.

***Hunting is forbidden in the close season***, unless the hunter has a permit to hunt in that period or holds a landholder's licence and hunts on the specified land. Hunting from a motor vehicle, etc., or stampeding animals from a motor vehicle, is strictly prohibited except in special circumstances. In particular, this prohibition does not apply to hunting waterfowl specified in Part A of the Fourth Schedule (*supra*) from a mechanically propelled vessel.

***The use and possession of poisoned bait, nets, gins, and traps*** is unlawful unless to destroy animals causing damage to livestock or crops.

**Part IV**

***Part IV of the Act deals with wild birds.*** No wild bird may be killed or captured, nor may its eggs or nest be removed unless the person who does so has a suitable permit, and no person may destroy, injure or disturb the nest or eggs of any wild bird, except insofar as it may be necessary for him to do so to exercise any right granted to him under a permit. "Wild Bird" for this purpose means a wild bird other than a bird specified in the Third, Fourth or Twelfth Schedules.

*No person, unless he has a valid permit to do so*, may sell or purchase any wild bird or its plumage, nest or eggs, whether or not the bird is mentioned in the Twelfth Schedule.

It should be noted that the penalties for the contravention of the provisions of this Part are heavy, and that the Part does not permit the killing or capture of a wild bird, or taking its nest or eggs in a National Park, Game Reserve, Private Game Reserve or any land without the permission of the owner.

#### **Part V**

This forbids the export from and import into the Colony of animals, trophies or meat.

#### **Parts VI and VII**

These Parts deal with Ivory and Rhinoceros horn and Government Trophies respectively. The latter Part includes birds and any Royal Game or any birds mentioned in the Fourth Schedule (Part A) – (*supra*) must be delivered to the nearest convenient Police Station or Native Commissioner's Office if killed or captured in contravention of the Act, or found dead.

#### **Part VIII**

This Part of the Act deals with evidence, etc., and here it may be noted that the onus is in many cases on the accused to prove his innocence rather than for the Crown to prove his guilt.

Finally the Act provides for the appointment of a Director of Wild Life Conservation, and of Honorary Officers, the destruction of animals in certain circumstances, and for the framing of Regulations.

#### **CONCLUSION**

To summarize; all birds, other than those specified as "unprotected" are protected throughout the Colony.

To repeat what was said at the beginning of this article, many members will probably wish to obtain their own copies of this Act, in view of its importance, and these can be obtained from the Federal Printing and Stationery Office at a cost of 4/ – .

### **PERCY FITZPATRICK INSTITUTE OF AFRICAN ORNITHOLOGY**

The following two appeals from the Director of the above Institute have already been published both in the *Ostrich* and the *Bokmakierie*; nevertheless it is felt that members' attention should be drawn to them, especially the second.

#### **1. Research Programme**

The Director writes that, in order better to plan the Institute's own research programme, and to fulfil its function as a liaison body in ornithological research throughout southern Africa, it would be of great value if bodies and individuals could inform him briefly of:

- (i) any lines of ornithological research they themselves are carrying out, and
- (ii) any lines of research which they feel would be of particular value or interest, but which for one reason or another, they are unable to undertake themselves.

From this information it should be possible to plan the Institute's own programme to concentrate on the more important gaps in our knowledge and to avoid unnecessary duplication of work. It will also enable the Institute to answer promptly, enquiries about research in progress.

#### **2. Wagtails. (This circular is quoted in full)**

One of the objects for which the Percy Fitzpatrick Institute was founded was to organise co-operative research into bird life in southern Africa. As the first such project, it is suggested that an attempt be made to gather more knowledge about our wagtails. Either the Cape Wagtail or the Pied Wagtail is common, even in urban areas, in most of the Union, the Federation, the Protectorates, South-West Africa and Portuguese East Africa. It is suggested that information be sought under the following heads:

- i. Breeding** – As many nests as possible should be recorded on SAOS Nest Record cards and special efforts should be made to follow up the histories of these nests by regular visits. From the data thus acquired, it should be possible to obtain reliable figures on dates and duration of the breeding season, variations in these in different parts of the subcontinent; number of broods; clutch-

size; incubation and fledging periods; role of sexes in incubation and in feeding the young; nesting success; choice of nest-sites.

*ii. Movements* – As many birds as possible should be ringed; and, where they can be kept under regular observation, colour-ringed as well when practicable. This will provide data on movements and longevity; and will enable detailed behaviour studies to be undertaken.

*iii. Roosts* – It is known that wagtails sometimes assemble in communal roosts. It is not known if this is seasonal or regular; to what extent if any, breeding birds join in such roosts; what are the normal and maximum numbers of birds which assemble; the times at which they arrive and depart, particularly in relation to sunset and sunrise and weather conditions.

*iv. Food* – Any detailed observations of food would be of great value.

*v. Inter-relations* – In many areas only one species occurs regularly (e.g. *M. capensis* in the S.W. Cape; *M. aguimp* in most of Rhodesia); but in areas where both occur, do they normally occur in different kinds of country? And, if so, which species occur where? If both forage on the same ground, are they segregated in breeding sites?

*vi. Tameness* – Wagtails are often familiar and tame birds, but not always. Are they shy in areas where they are rare.

May I commend both these enquiries to ROS members? Nest-records, photographers, ringers and ordinary birdwatchers alike can assist in the wagtail enquiry. Any information should be sent to the Director, Percy Fitzpatrick Institute of African Ornithology, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch, Cape Province.

**Goliath Heron** – During March this year, through the courtesy of the Department of National Parks, I was able to visit a nest of this species at the Sebakwe Dam east of Que Que. There is no nesting record of this species either in the Southern Rhodesian Check List or the 1959 Supplement. However, Mr. Carl Vernon informs me that he has now received a nest Record Card from the Kariba area, while, according to Mr. J.C. Tebbitt, Regional National Parks Warden, (West), his department has one definite record from Wankie National Park [Hwange], and suspects the Goliath Heron of breeding at the Victoria Falls.

Mr. Tebbitt points out in his letter, that Austin Roberts gives the breeding season of the Goliath Heron in Southern Africa as September, but that both this record and the Wankie one were much later in the season. The latter in fact, was in May. Records given in the Northern Rhodesia Check List, moreover, are for the period May to September. The breeding season in this part of the world is obviously not confined to the spring.

**Nest Record Card Organiser** – Perhaps this is a suitable point to remind members that Mr. Miles has relinquished the duties of Nest Record Card Organiser, much to everyone's regret. Mr. Carl Vernon has taken over the organisation of the N.R.C. scheme from Mr. Miles and hopes that old members will continue to give their loyal support and that new members will contact him about submitting their Nest records.

Cards, records, queries, etc., can be sent either to Mr. Vernon, P.O. Box 562, Bulawayo (Phone 60641), or for convenience of Mashonaland members to Mr. Brooke, P.O. Box 8156 Causeway, (Phone 29071), who will act as a collecting centre, and then forward them to Bulawayo.

**Priest's *The Birds of Southern Rhodesia*** – Dr. W. Gilges, P.O. Box 22, Mongu – Lealui, Barotse Protectorate, has a set which he wishes to sell. Volume 1 is unbound, the remainder are bound. Will anybody interested get in contact with Dr. Gilges?