S.W.A. SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY · S.W.A. WETENSKAPLIKE VERENIGING

S.W.A. WISSENSCHAFTLICHE GESELLSCHAFT

Die Federzeichnung eines Urolestus melanoleucus von Jochen Voigts wurde entnommen dem Buch von W. Hoesch: Die Vogelwelt Südwestafrikas

M I T T E I L U N G E N
der
Ornithologischen Arbeitsgruppe

Schriftleitung: Postf. 67, Windhoek

No.8/10,7.Jahrg., Nov.1971 - Jan.1972

ZWEITE ORNITHOLOGISCHE TAGUNG IN WINDHOEK VOM 4. BIS 6. APRIL 1972

Das Gruendungsjahr der Ornithologischen Arbeitsgruppe der S.W.A. Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft ist 1962; schon nach einem Jahr trat sie mit einer grossangelegten und glaenzend durchgefuehrten Tagung in Windhoek an die Oeffentlichkeit. Die diesjaehrige Tagung soll an die Gruendung vor 10 Jahren erinnern. Das Programm sieht wie 1963 eine Ausstellung, Vortraege und Exkursion vor.

Ueber das, was die Ausstellung bieten wird, wurde bereits in den vorigen Ornithologischen Mitteilungen (No.5/7, 1971) berichtet; sie ist vom 4. bis 6. April 1972 im Ausstellungsraum des Karakul-Zuchtvereins (Ausstellungsgelaende) zu sehen. Ab 7. April wird die Ausstellung ohne die Sektion "Lebende Voegel" in die Dr. Erich Luebbert Stiftung, John Meinertstr. Ecke Leutweinstr., verlegt, um nach den Osterferien besonders Schulen Gelegenheit zur Besichtigung zu geben.

Das Vorlesungsprogramm sieht folgende Referenten vor:

H. Berry, Ornithological Officer of the Nature Conservation, Walvis Bay.
H. Graf zu Castell-Rüdenhausen, Vorsitzender des S.W.A.-Jaeger-Vereins.
E.A. Drygalla, Ornithologische Arbeitsgruppe, Walvis Bay, in Verbindung mit Herrn H. von Schwind.
C. Elliott, Percy FitzPatrick Institute der Universitaet Kapstadt.
Dr. R. Jensen, Senior Ornithological Officer, Nature Conservation, Windhoek.
W.D. Keibel, Ornithologische Arbeitsgruppe, Swakopmund.
H. Kolberg, Sekretaer der Ornithologischen Arbeitsgruppe, Windhoek.
Dr. R. Sossinka, Ornithologisches Institut der Technischen Universitaet Braunschweig.
H. von Schwind, Leiter der Ornithologischen Arbeitsgruppe, Swakopmund, in Verbindung mit Herrn E.A. Drygalla.
Dr. J.S. Watt, Ornithologische Arbeitsgruppe, Windhoek.

Die Themen der Vortraege, die zum Teil von Dias- oder Filmvorfuehrungen begleitet sind, sind noch nicht im Einzelnen formuliert und werden mit Zeitangabe rechtzeitig mit der Bekanntgabe des Gesamtprogramms veroeffentlicht.

Am Mittwoch, dem 5. April 1972 wird Herr Dr. A. Kemna aus Wuppertal/Barmen im Vortragssaal der H.P.S. um 20.30 Uhr einen Reisebericht mit Diasvorfuehrung "Zu den Voegeln im skandinavischen Norden" geben.

GREGORY JACKASS PENGUIN

von Marie Philip; Verleger David Philip, Cape Town 1971; 63 Seiten mit reichlicher Bebilderung; Fotographien und Zeichnungen; Text in englisch)

(Eine Buchanzeige)

In eine Erzaehlung um den Brillenpinguin "Gregory Peck" ist sehr geschickt die Arbeitsweise der SANCCOB (South African National Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds) eingebaut, die sich als wichtigste Aufgabe die Behandlung und Pflege ölverschmutzter Seevoegel gestellt gestellt hat. Das im leichten Plauderton berichtende Buechlein soll sowohl die ansprechen, die sich noch ein weiches und mitfuehlendes Herz fuer die notleidende Kreatur bewahrt haben, als auch neue Freunde und Helfer gewinnen. Fuer diesen Zweck ist die Schrift sehr wohl geeignet; sie gibt aber keineswegs eine belehrende Darstellung des Lebens und der Lebenswelt des Pinguins. Wohl aber kann sie auch dem strengen Wissenschaftler als Lockerungsuebung empfohlen werden.

Gregory Peck ist der Pinguin, der durch sein Benehmen zu einer gewissen Prominenz unter den SANCCOB-Beamten heranwuchs; ja, sogar die Kapstaedter Presse berichtete von ihm. Die Art, wie sich Gregory seines Persoenlichkeitswertes bewusst zu sein schien und diesen auch zu wahren wusste, ist amüsant beschrieben. Seine wiederholte Rueckkehr zur Rettungs-Station, sein augenfaellig demonstriertes Junggesellendasein bis zur grossen Liebe ist koestlich und mit viel Liebe geschildert. Mit der grossen Liebe wurde auch Gregory Peck wieder in ein geordnetes Pinguinenleben zurueckgefuehrt - und damit auch die Wahrheit seiner Persoenlichkeit geklaert, denn: "Er" war ein Mädchen.

(H.K.)

(Den ersten Abschnitt des Buechleins bringen wir nachfolgend als Leseprobe. Die Schriftleitung.)

Gregory Jackass Penguin

Marie Philip - Chapter I - pp. 13-27

"One wintry morning, "Gregory Peck", a Jackass penguin, was brought to a suburban house in Cape Town. He was not wrapped like a baby in a blanket and abandoned on the front doorstep, but his arrival was almost like that. Though he was certainly as helpless and miserable as any discarded infant when he was discovered at the gate, on a sack in a cardboard box, he caused no surprise to these particular householders. With the same care as they have received many similar arrivals in the past months they took him in. That they were willing and ready to accept him was a link in the chain of events that had begun with the closing of the Suez Canal and the diverting of oil tankers around the coast of Southern Africa.

When the oil tanker Esso Essen struck a submerged object 5 kilometres west of the Cape Peninsula in April 1968, 15 000 tons of crude oil were spilled into the sea. A storm and a spring tide swept the oil high up over local beaches. In some areas it covered the white sand in layers of heavy black slime, fouled the rocks and floated sluggishly in the rock pools. If people accustomed to visiting and enjoying the beaches were horrified by the filthy mess, their distress was as nothing to that of the seabirds which had come into contact with the oil. Their feathers and eyes and legs smeared with oil, they were unable to swim or fish or fly. Almost 3 000 seabirds are known to have been affected by oil from the Esso Essen and at least two-thirds of these were penguins - the most severely

affected because they were unable to fly clear of the oil. Many more must have died at sea, and those that were washed up and found on the beaches were helpless to help themselves and would surely perish.

This was the Cape's first experience of an oil crisis of such magnitude. As more and more birds were found on the beaches in this appalling condition, and were transported in boxes or on sacks in motor cars or by any possible means to join the hundreds that were already being treated by the local S P C A, the public's imagination was caught and, in answer to radio appeals, willing helpers of all ages came forward to clean and feed the birds or to donate fish.

This particular crisis was, in a measure, dealt with - as far as was possible with the limited facilities available, and with the limited experience of how best to clean the birds without doing them further damage. The birds surviving the Esso Essen disaster were released back to the sea. But, as still another batch of about 200 penguins was brought in from Robben Island, polluted with oil from an unidentified source, it became apparent to a group of concerned people that there was already a chronic problem of pollution of the coastal waters. There was urgent need for an organization dedicated specifically to treating, cleaning and rehabilitating seabirds that had been injured or polluted with oil.

The objectives of the organization, which was to become the South African National Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds (SANCCOB), were much wider than cleaning and rehabilitating. They hoped to prevent species unique to Southern African coasts from becoming extinct (the Jackass penguin is one whose numbers are declining), and to initiate research to increase scientific knowledge of coastal bird life. But the immediate need was for premises to house the birds as they were brought in, and for this purpose Ernst and Althea Westphal made available their home in Newlands, a suburb of Cape Town.

Theirs is an old-fashioned house, built at the turn of the century, with large rooms and high ceilings, and standing in a spacious enclosed garden - an informal and welcoming house for both people and penguins. And to this house in July 1968 came "Gregory Peck". No one can remember when he first acquired his name, and at the time of his arrival he was simply one of a number of what were termed "inherited" birds - not brought to them directly from a beach or out of the sea but first handled and treated elsewhere. He was a young bird, without the black and white markings around his neck and head, and he was a doleful, unattractive sight because although not badly affected by oil he had been mishandled. He was underweight and his face was covered in coagulated fish, which had set hard like glue and was very unpleasant to touch and difficult to get off. But he was gradually cleaned and patiently persuaded to accept being fed by hand and, although he resisted nervously at first, he was soon gulping down his two or three pilchards each day.

There was no way out of having to hand-feed these penguins in captivity. Often they arrive in an emaciated condition - an adult normally weighing about 3 kilograms (6 or 7 pounds) may be down to as little as 1 300 grams - and they need to take food as soon as possible. Accustomed to catching a swimming fish, a penguin takes no interest in a dead fish on the ground, and it should in any case not learn to become a scavenger or carrion-eater. Although it has to be persuaded to accept dead fish, at least it is taking them whole, and head first.

To watch the feeding is to wonder how the penguin manage to get the fish down at all. The worker sits down, grasping the penguin

firmly at the back of its head while holding its body with the knees. The beak must be forced open while the fish, after being dipped in water, is pushed in, but the worker can force that fish only halfway in; after that the bird must help! Only too often, with a new patient, there is an angry shake of the head and out comes the fish again. The penguin has a sharp hook on the end of its beak and it can give a savage peck. The workers protect themselves as best they can with strips of sticking-plaster - they find gloves too clumsy - but the job is hard on the hands, and needs a great deal of patience and persistence. When the fish has been accepted and swallowed, the fish juices that have dribbled around the penguin's head must be sponged away or the bird will soon be in the mess that Gregory was in when he arrived.

The more assured the worker, the easier the process is for everyone. Because the feeding is of such importance to the recovery of the penguins, SANCCOB has struggled to build up a body of regular helpers who can give the birds confidence by their practised competence. The workers try to achieve a calm, quiet atmosphere at feeding-time because penguins tend to be flustered and put off their food by loud voices or other disturbing noises.

Within a few days Gregory seemed to have settled rather well into his new environment, and he made good progress.

Because there was only one enclosed pen at this time and there was the danger that a disease might spread if the penguins were confined too much together, the birds were allowed to run of the Westphal's rambling garden, and Gregory and other convalescents pottered unconcernedly up and down the paths and around the bushes, as often as not in the company of a large Alsatian and a small Cairn. To any chance visitor they were a comical, unsuburban sight, these self-contained miniature headwaiters, with their formal black-and-white jackets and black boots, and their short legs which caused them inevitably to waddle.

The swim was a very necessary part of the day's routine for penguins that had been cleaned and were now recovering their strength. The problem of how to provide this without a convenient swimming-pool had been solved by filling a trailer with water, and they were all regularly dropped in and hoisted out. Once or twice a week the workers packed the penguins into baskets and took them for a salt-water swim at Bloubergstrand in Table Bay.

The bay sweeps round from the busy dockyard area of Cape Town to the bleak beach of industrial Paardeneiland, then on the residential Milnerton and a long stretch of white beach and sand dunes until the rocky outcrop surrounding the small inlet of the fishing-village of Blouberg. Features of the village are its many old fishing-cottages, most now restored and converted, and across the bay the unparalleled view of Table Mountain at its most table-like behind the city of Cape Town. Nearby is a shallow rock pool with a suitable enclosing barrier of rock, ideal for swimming the penguins. The workers had to be ready to discourage any penguins from trying to get out to the open sea - they were not yet in a fit condition for that - but usually the penguins were quite content to swim around in the pool and shake themselves dry on the low, flat rocks that were dotted around inside the barrier. This was a popular excursion for all, probably as good for penguin morale as for health. At first some would be as reluctant to jump into the pool as any warm, dry bather, and would crouch on a rock and peer into the water as if trying to gauge the temperature by eye, not being able to poke an exploratory toe first. Those were peered irresolute too long usual-

ly found themselves helped to take the plunge by a firm push from behind.

Once in the water, a penguin is a delight to watch. Though it moves awkwardly on land, unable with its short legs to run, and unable to fly, this bird is in its natural element in water - no longer comical, but swift and graceful. It can swim almost as fast as a shark, its natural enemy in water, and has an endurance that enables it to strike out as far as 100 kilometres from the coast, and to live in the sea for weeks on end without returning to land.

In the trailor and the rock pool, of course, swimming was not a serious fish-hunting matter but an opportunity for fun and games, particularly for those that were feeling their strength returning, and they rolled and dived and somersaulted. Often, incongruously, they lay on their sides, using only one flipper to swim sidestroke.

These swims help the workers to assess whether a penguin is yet ready for release. The all-important question is whether the two parts of the bird's waterproofing system are functioning properly so that its down and its skin do not get wet in the water.

Firstly, at the base of the tail, there are the preen glands, which secrete the natural oils. When the birds preen themselves, they take the oil from the glands and spread it as they smooth their plumage. A dejected or sick bird does not bother to preen and the swims help to encourage the convalescents to do so, while they dry themselves.

Secondly, there is the highly developed structure of the plumage itself. The barbules of each feather have many little hooks, visible only under a microscope (see photograph on page 45), which enables the barbules to interlock tightly with each other to form an impenetrable protective covering over the down and skin. If one watches a penguin drying itself when it comes out of water, one can see, as well as all the quivering and shaking and flipper-flapping and neck-stretching, that it puffs out its plumage and then quickly closes the feathers tightly together, squeezing out the water, which then runs out the feathers.

If these two devices are not working properly, and the skin can get wet, the bird will become cold in the water. It will give up trying to fish, will leave the sea for the land, and will very soon die. One might think that a penguin would not mind the cold, accustomed as it is to swimming for long periods in icy water, but this notion is the wrong way round: it can stand the cold water only because it has developed a natural insulation against it, like a diver's protective wetsuit. Before being allowed back to sea, each penguin has to pass a thorough test of its plumage. After it has swum for at least twenty minutes, a worker will examine its feathers very carefully, ruffling them backwards layer by layer to check whether the down underneath is fluffy and dry. If it is at all matted or damp, the bird must convalesce a little longer.

In due course it was decided that Gregory was fit and fat enough to return to sea. His "home number", on the red plastic rings attached to each flipper when he was first admitted, was replaced by a numbered metal ring issued by the Department of Fisheries and, with several other penguins in fit condition, Number 640 was transported to Bloubergstrand and set down on the open beach. They filed off together into the water without ceremony or delay, and swam away, leaving their temporary guardians with a happy sense of achievement, and a hope that these birds would safely find their way back to their own islands and colonies.