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epoch the Common Sandpiper cannot be regarded as in any sense a regular member of the Ethiopian breeding avifauna. It would appear to us that the case of the Common Sandpiper is in part analogous to that of the White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* and House Martin *Delichon urbica*, recorded as breeding occasionally in South Africa, as discussed by Moreau (1966: 123), only in this instance it is the sole member of the Tringinae to breed anywhere within the tropics.

Doubtless Cunningham van Someren is correct in stating that Common Sandpipers are present throughout the year in East Africa. We can corroborate from our own experience in Rhodesia and Zambia, merely as one further example, that this is also the case further south. But a similar situation exists for some other scolopacine waders, e.g. the Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, and is not evidence of local breeding. Thus Dowsett (in Benson *et al.* 1970: 14) counted more than 500 Greenshanks in a stretch of 300 miles of the Luangwa River walked in July and August 1966 and 1967. Actually Dowsett (pers. comm.) finds that the Greenshank is the commonest of the scolopacines which overwinter in Zambia, the Common Sandpiper the least so, and so the least likely to breed; this presumably applying in other parts of Africa too.

Finally, we cannot but remark, that despite the amount of ornithological investigation in East Africa in recent decades, no further evidence in support of these earlier observations has come to light.

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## The predators of the Jackass Penguin *Spheniscus demersus*

by J. Cooper

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### INTRODUCTION

Temperate zone penguins appear to have different predators and may experience a lower level of predation than sub-Antarctic and Antarctic species (Stonehouse 1967). Important predators in high latitudes are the Leopard Seal *Hydrurga leponentyx*, Great Skua *Catharacta maccormicki*, and Giant Petrel *Macronectes giganteus* (Stonehouse 1960, 1967; Swales 1965; Young 1963, 1970). Virtually nothing is known of the predators or the level of predation of temperate species.

Casual unquantified observations were made of predation on the temperate

Jackass Penguin *Spheniscus demersus*, and on its eggs and chicks during the period February 1971 to December 1972 on Dassen Island (33°25'S, 18°06'E) off the west coast of South Africa. Predation of the Jackass Penguin is considered in three sections; predation of eggs, chicks and juveniles and adults.

#### PREDATION OF EGGS

The only observed predator of eggs was the Dominican Gull *Larus dominicanus*. The gull was never observed to take eggs from incubating penguins as does the Great Skua (Young 1970). However the possibility exists that gulls may work in pairs to entice penguins from their nests (Headman, Dassen Island, pers. comm.). Gulls were only seen to take eggs from deserted surface nests and were therefore acting more as scavengers than as predators. Human disturbance to breeding penguins permits gulls to obtain more eggs than they would under undisturbed conditions. Deserted eggs in burrows were left untouched, since they were invisible to gulls patrolling overhead. The increase in the penguin's surface nesting habit due to guano removal and paving of the breeding areas on some islands has increased the gulls' chances of obtaining eggs. Berry *et al.* (in press) found that gull numbers increased on Halifax Island, South West Africa, during guano collection and that many eggs were taken by gulls as the penguins deserted because of human disturbance. Guano removal has apparently caused an increase in surface nesting on Halifax Island.

While skuas and Giant Petrels occur in the seas around Dassen they are not seen ashore, and therefore do not take eggs (or chicks) as they do in high latitudes.

Man has been an important predator of Jackass Penguins. From 1917 to 1931 an average of 460,000 eggs was officially collected annually on Dassen Island (Cott 1953). Collecting was halted in 1968 and poaching is now at a low level, but still causes some disturbance.

#### PREDATION OF CHICKS

Penguin chicks are predated by Dominican Gulls, Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus* and possibly by feral domestic cats *Felis lybica*. Gulls took small unattended chicks (up to one week old) from surface nests. Human disturbance causing temporary desertion increases chick loss since small chicks are normally brooded continuously. Larger chicks were only attacked if very weak. The Sacred Ibis was only seen to attack weak unattended chicks, mostly comatose. This bird mainly scavenges corpses, and is only a casual predator.

Feral cats occur on Dassen Island feeding mainly on the feral rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*. It is possible that they sometimes take penguin chicks though this was never proved by stomach content examination. Small chicks often disappeared from deserted burrows inaccessible to gulls and could have been taken by cats. One penguin chick (*ca.* 1,500 g) was found showing signs of having been partially eaten by a cat.

Chicks have been collected for food and for fish bait in the past, but man is no longer a predator. The extinction of the penguin colony on Robben Island in Table Bay (South Africa) was probably partially due to the collection of chicks in large numbers.

#### PREDATION OF JUVENILES AND ADULTS

The Cape Fur Seal *Arctocephalus pusillus* was the only predator seen to take fledged penguins. A single animal, thought to be a female by its size, was often seen feeding on penguins in House Bay, Dassen Island. A total of 57 penguin corpses was washed up, but many more must have been carried

away by prevailing winds and currents. On one day a total of 25 was washed up. The seal's technique was invariably to decapitate the bird with one bite and then to disembowel the carcass by shaking, removing the belly skin and eating the viscera and stomach contents. The breast muscle and the rest of the corpse were left untouched. The Cape Fur Seal is not thought to be a common predator of the Jackass Penguin; Rand (1959) mentions only one bull seal which was feeding on penguins off Dyer Island near Cape Agulhas in 1937. A similar case occurred at Halifax Island in 1957. Bourne & Dixon (1973) quote an observation made at sea near Dassen Island where "a seal was seen to catch a penguin, shake it about and toss it in the air". This was most probably a Cape Fur Seal. The habit seems to be confined to individuals which only appear interested in the stomach contents of penguins. The seal was not always present and it is considered unlikely that penguins formed its sole diet as no drastic decline in penguin numbers was noticed at the landing stages in House Bay.

On other islands seals and penguins apparently live together in harmony. I have observed seals close inshore at Dyer Island and Possession Island, South West Africa, but they were not seen to catch penguins. Predation of penguins by Fur Seals is not considered regular by Stonehouse (1967). However, the New Zealand Fur Seal *A. forsteri* takes Rockhopper Penguins *Eudyptes crestatus* in quantity off Campbell Island (Bailey & Sorensen 1962), and apparently on Macquarie Island as well (Warham 1963). Boswall (1972) quotes observations by Ian Strange of the South American Sea Lion *Otaria byronia* killing the Magellanic Penguin *Spheniscus magellanicus* in the Falkland Islands. Sea lions do not occur in South African waters. The Leopard Seal is very rare in South African waters (P. Best pers. comm.) and thus cannot be an important predator of the resident Jackass Penguin.

An old record of a Bryde's Whale *Balaenoptera edeni* (= *brydei*), with 15 Jackass Penguins in its gut (Olsen 1913), is considered to be unusual (P. Best pers. comm.), as this animal has a narrow gullet and feeds on small fish and euphausiids. Bird remains were absent from 119 Bryde's Whale stomachs examined from South African waters (Best 1967).

Killer Whales *Orcinus orca* have been recorded taking penguins in high latitudes and do occur in South African waters. Penguins have not been found in ten stomachs examined by P. Best although one contained an albatross. The Killer Whale is probably only a minor predator of Jackass Penguins.

Giant Petrels have been seen scavenging on Jackass Penguins killed by Cape Fur Seals but have not been seen to attack live birds; at Gough Island this petrel kills freshly moulted Rockhopper Penguins as they enter the water (Swales 1965).

Likely, but unproven predators of penguins are sharks. Penguins were often seen on Dassen Island with missing feet or truncated flippers. These injuries could have been caused by seals or sharks. Hagen (1952) mentions the Blue Shark *Glyphis glaucus* as a possible predator of Rockhopper Penguins at Gough Island.

Historically man has been an important predator of juvenile and adult penguins. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries many birds were collected for food on Robben Island. They have been used as fish bait, and are occasionally drowned in fishing nets. At present man is no more than a casual predator of Jackass Penguins.

#### SUMMARY

The Jackass Penguin is preyed upon by several animals, but none of these appears to be an important predator. Predation of eggs by Dominican Gulls

is related to the level of human disturbance and the increase in surface nesting. The Dominican Gull and Sacred Ibis take small unattended or weak chicks. Feral domestic cats may also take chicks, but proof is lacking. Juvenile and adult birds are preyed on by individual Cape Fur Seals but this is a rare occurrence. The Cape Fur Seal was only observed to eat viscera and stomach contents. Predation by sharks is an unknown factor, and Killer Whales, Leopard Seals, Skuas and Giant Petrels are not thought to be important predators in South African waters. Man has been an important predator of penguins in the past, taking eggs, chicks and fledged birds, causing the extinction of at least one island breeding colony. Predation by man is no longer important.

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## The Boran Cisticola in Ethiopia

by J. S. Ash

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Following Benson's (1946) account of unidentified Cisticolas in southern Ethiopia, North & McChesney (1964) collected and recorded what were apparently similar birds in Kenya. The latter authors dubbed them "Boran Cisticolas".

Although Boran Cisticolas are morphologically inseparable from the