

Starlings and the “Mystery” room in PD HAHN

In mid-October, a request reached the doors of CEM OHSE Unit from Mila Truter involved in the UCT Starling project, sought entry to a room shrouded in mystery—its entrance elusive, its keys lost to time. The intrigue deepened as BB, a Starling of renown, was glimpsed slipping through a window into the enigmatic chamber. Rumours swirled of a hidden nest within. BB, a creature of the south side of Upper Campus (Neville Building) born in 2018, has made the PD HAHN building its clandestine haunt for the last few years

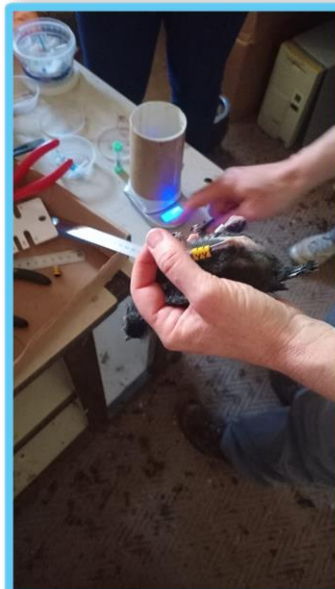


Upon discovering the elusive access door adjacent to the PD Hahn’s prayer room (level 5), the CEM OHSE Unit, with the discreet assistance of P&S: Maintenance, embarked on a mission to unlock its secrets. After several days of quiet persistence, success was ours. The space beyond was vast, a forgotten realm filled with relics of the past—ancient equipment, faded posters, and neglected furniture. We entered with the utmost care, ensuring not to disturb the avian inhabitants. The Starling project team conducted a meticulous search, eventually uncovering the nest, expertly concealed high on a shelf in a mysterious, soundproofed chamber, hinting at its past life as a music studio which possible could have once been the clandestine home of the UCT Radio Station (now called the “Mystery Office”). The starlings had chosen their sanctuary wisely. Nestled within were three eggs, poised on the brink of life.

Ten days later, the Starling group observed the parent birds delivering insects to their young, confirming the arrival of new life. Only two chicks had emerged, and they were carefully weighed at one week old.



Another ten days passed before the two chicks were discreetly ringed, receiving the enigmatic names YY and ZZ.



By mid-November, whispers began to circulate that the chicks had left the nest. YY was spotted, stealthily honing its flying skills beyond the confines of the room. However, ZZ remained elusive, its absence shrouded in mystery due to a whispered injury to its wing. Young chicks, with their fledgling wings, are at risk, particularly from lurking predators or the silent threat of passing cars in parking lots, as their flying skills remain unrefined at this tender age.



The hope lingers in hushed tones that YY (as seen above) will one day forge its own path and create a legacy.