

TWENTIETH RINGING REPORT FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA

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SUMMARY

MORANT, P. D. 1979. Twentieth ringing report for southern Africa. *Ostrich* 50:83-87. A report on ringing activities for southern Africa from July 1976 to June 1977 is presented. A total of 23 058 birds of 363 species was ringed. The figures indicate that the general decline in ringing activities since a peak in 1972/73 is continuing.

INTRODUCTION

This report covers the activities of bird ringers operating under the aegis of the South African Bird Ringing Unit (SAFRING) during the period from July 1976 to June 1977 in which 23 058 birds of 363 species were ringed. This is the lowest total since 1963/64 and is part of the continuing general decline since 1972/73 when approximately 75 000 birds were ringed (Fig. 1). The trend is in accord with the policy of the Unit to stimulate more scientifically productive ringing. However, there has not been a comparable decline in the number of species ringed although for the first time since 1969/70 it has fallen below 400. The highest number of species ringed in a year was 475 in 1974/75 (Fig. 1).

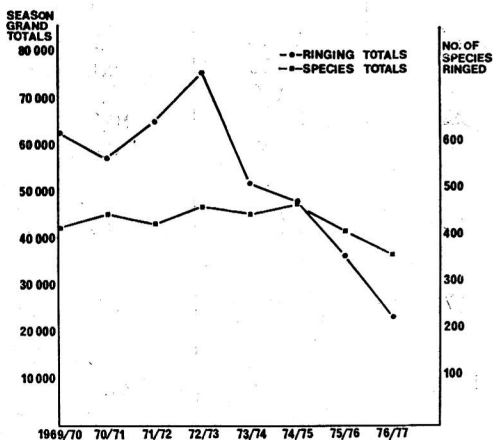


FIGURE 1
The season grand totals of birds and species ringed since the establishment of the South African Bird Ringing Unit in 1971

DISTRIBUTION OF RINGING ACTIVITY

Ringing was undertaken in all the provinces of South Africa as well as in South West Africa, Rhodesia and Malawi. As was the case in 1975/76 (Vernon 1977) the majority of birds were ringed in the Transvaal, the Cape Province and Rhodesia. Fifty-one of the 63 active ringers operated in these three areas and accounted for 75% of the birds ringed (Table 1). The Rhodesian Ornithological Society, the Barberspan Ornithological Research Station and the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology each ringed over 2 000 birds and between them accounted for 50% of the birds ringed (Table 2). The Cape Provincial Administration, the South West Africa Administration and the Percy FitzPatrick Institute all ringed more birds in 1976/77 than in 1975/76. The most active individual ringers were A. J. Manson (3 810 birds ringed), J. Cooper (1 997), A. Craig (1 782) and A. J. Tree (1 490). Ten other individuals or organizations ringed more than 300 birds in 1976/77.

TABLE 1
REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF BIRD RINGING ACTIVITY DURING JULY 1976 – JUNE 1977

Locality	No. ringers	No. species ringed	No. birds ringed	Percentage of total no. birds ringed
Cape Province	17	118	5 660	24,5
Natal	6	62	2 145	9,3
Orange Free State	2	17	150	0,7
Rhodesia	13	187	6 117	26,5
South West Africa	2	98	1 997	8,7
Transvaal	21	163	5 677	24,6
Malawi	1	85	598	2,6
Sub-Antarctic Islands	2	14	714	3,1
Totals	63	363	23 058	100,0

TABLE 2
RINGING ACTIVITY OF ORGANIZATIONS DURING JULY 1976 – JUNE 1977

Organization	Species ringed	Birds ringed	Percentage of total birds ringed
<i>Cape Province</i>			
Cape Bird Club	77	1 354	5,9
Cape Divisional Council, Rondevlei	42	938	4,1
Cape Provincial Administration	8	839	3,6
Percy FitzPatrick Institute	32	2 384	10,3
Eastern Cape Bird Club	6	145	0,6
<i>Natal</i>			
Natal Bird Club	62	2 145	9,3
<i>Orange Free State</i>			
Orange Free State Administration	17	150	0,7
<i>Rhodesia</i>			
Rhodesian Ornithological Society	187	6 117	26,5
<i>South West Africa</i>			
South West Africa Administration	21	1 737	7,5
South West Africa Scientific Society	78	260	1,1
<i>Transvaal</i>			
Transvaal Provincial Administration	35	3 203	13,9
N. Transvaal Ornithological Society	97	974	4,2
Witwatersrand Bird Club	115	1 500	6,5
<i>Malawi</i>			
	85	598	2,6
<i>Sub-Antarctic Islands</i>			
	14	714	3,1
Totals	363	23 058	100,0

BIRDS RINGED

The 20 most frequently ringed birds in 1976/77 accounted for 68% of the rings used. Five species did not feature on a similar list for 1975/76 (Vernon 1977) while eight species on the 1976/77 list do not appear amongst the 20 most frequently ringed species (Table 3). The waders, as a group, have attracted the attention of amateur ringers in view of the relative ease with which large numbers of these Palaearctic migrants can be caught and ringed. Furthermore the absence of these migrants during the austral winter gives respite from ringing and allows time for the analysis of results. The strong amateur interest in raptors is not reflected by the numbers ringed. Approximately 25% of all amateur projects dealing with a single species or a limited number of species concern raptors.

TABLE 3
THE TWENTY MOST FREQUENTLY RINGED SPECIES DURING JULY 1976 - JUNE 1977

Species	No. birds ringed	Grand Total	Notes (see footnote)
Jackass Penguin <i>Spheniscus demersus</i>	708	10 587	
Wandering Albatross <i>Diomedea exulans</i>	441	1 415	A B
Cape Shoveller <i>Anas smithii</i>	488	2 139	B
Yellowbilled Duck <i>Anas undulata</i>	2 120	52 203	
Redbilled Teal <i>Anas erythrorhyncha</i>	411	8 525	
Redeyed Pochard <i>Netta erythrophthalma</i>	258	5 556	A
Cape Vulture <i>Gyps coprotheres</i>	392	4 129	B
Redknobbed Coot <i>Fulica cristata</i>	301	23 051	
Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	548	707	A B
Curlew Sandpiper <i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	1 421	16 749	
Little Stint <i>Calidris minuta</i>	555	12 936	
Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i>	406	1 884	B
Swift Tern <i>Sterna bergii</i>	1 617	1 938	A B
Laughing Dove <i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	374	33 230	
Cape White-eye <i>Zosterops pallidus</i>	372	7 794	
Masked Weaver <i>Ploceus velatus</i>	708	32 676	
Redbilled Quelea <i>Quelea quelea</i>	2 477	89 764	
Red Bishop <i>Euplectes orix</i>	1 214	24 224	
Redcollared Widow <i>Euplectes ardens</i>	390	3 464	A B
Redshouldered Widow <i>Euplectes axillaris</i>	540	1 901	B

A = Did not feature on same list for 1975/76.

B = Does not feature amongst the top 20 species ringed.

BIRDS RECOVERED

481 recoveries were processed during the period from July 1976 to June 1977. 84 foreign-ringed birds, constituting 17% of the total, were recovered in this period. The 20 most frequently recovered species represent 70% of all recoveries in 1976/77 (Table 4).

The number of birds recovered in 1976/77 is markedly lower than the figures for previous years (Fig. 2).

The decline in the numbers of birds recovered is greater than that expected from the decline in ringing activities in recent years. The number of birds ringed in 1976/77 declined by 36% in comparison with 1975/76 while recoveries of locally-ringed birds declined by 69% over the same period (Table 5). Recoveries of foreign-ringed birds also showed a decline (38%) which indicated that the overall rate of reporting of recoveries has also declined.

TABLE 4

THE TWENTY MOST FREQUENTLY RECOVERED SPECIES DURING JULY 1976 - JUNE 1977

Species	No. locally-ringed recoveries	No. foreign-ringed recoveries	Totals
Jackass Penguin <i>Spheniscus demersus</i>	37	—	37
Wandering Albatross <i>Diomedea exulans</i>	20	9	29
Cattle Egret <i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	12	—	12
White Stork <i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	3	11	14
Sacred Ibis <i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>	5	—	5
Yellowbilled Duck <i>Anas undulata</i>	32	—	32
Redbilled Teal <i>Anas erythrorhyncha</i>	11	—	11
Cape Vulture <i>Gyps coprotheres</i>	19	—	19
Redknobbed Coot <i>Fulica cristata</i>	5	—	5
Silver Gull <i>Larus novaehollandiae</i>	25	—	25
Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>	11	27	38
Arctic Tern <i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	—	9	9
Sandwich Tern <i>Sterna sandwicensis</i>	—	9	9
Swift Tern <i>Sterna bergii</i>	8	—	8
Laughing Dove <i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	24	—	24
European Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	11	7	18
Spottedbacked Weaver <i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>	7	—	7
Cape Weaver <i>Ploceus capensis</i>	6	—	6
Masked Weaver <i>Ploceus velatus</i>	21	—	21
Red Bishop <i>Euplectes orix</i>	10	—	10

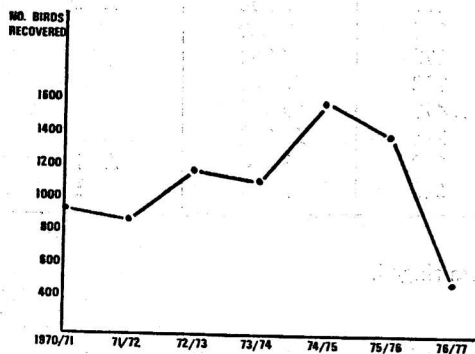


FIGURE 2
The season totals of birds recovered since the establishment of the South African Bird Ringing Unit in 1971.

DISCUSSION

It is hoped that the decline in ringing activity will not continue and that stability will be attained at, or near, the current level. The Unit's policy of encouraging project-orientated ringing is beginning to bear fruit; new ringers tend to view bird ringing as a tool to assist in solving problems rather than an end in itself. The marked decline in the number of recoveries reported is disturbing. Methods by which the rate of recovery of ringed birds can be increased are being investigated by the Unit.

TABLE 5
COMPARISON OF RINGING AND RECOVERY TOTALS FOR 1975/76 AND 1976/77

Ringling Year	Total no. ringed	No. locally-ringed recoveries	No. foreign-ringed recoveries	Total number recoveries
1975/76	36 016	1 256	135	1 391
1976/77	23 058	397	84	481
% decrease	36	69	38	66

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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REFERENCE

VERNON, C. J. 1977. Nineteenth Ringing Report for southern Africa. *Ostrich* 48:106-109.

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