

Malachite Sunbird recaptured after ten years

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Malachite Sunbirds *Nectarinia famosa* were ringed at various localities in the Free State since 1990 (De Swardt 2001). At one of these sites, Free State National Botanical Gardens, capture sessions were mostly during the period March–May (when *Leonotus leonurus* are in flower) and on few occasions during September (when *Aloe granidentata* are flowering at the hilly areas of garden). Since the sunbird project was initiated in the Free State (De Swardt 1995), 128 sunbirds have been caught and ringed at the *Leonotus* clumps. Of the 12 recaptured, only one has been controlled outside of the gardens (see De Swardt 2001).

During 2002 and early 2003 regular ringing was conducted in an effort to collect recapture data of sunbirds and other species. On 22 April 2003, while still busy erecting the last 6-meter net in one of the *Leonotus* clumps in the Botanical Gardens, I noticed a sunbird in the net in the opposite clump and immediately observed that it bore a red colour-ring. The recaptured female sunbird carried ring number F31781 and I had reason to be excited as I recognized the ring number from previous recaptures. The bird was first ringed as a juvenile (possible female) on 19 April 1993 making the recaptured bird 10 years and 3 days old. Interestingly, it was ringed at the same *Leonotus* clump. It was first resighted on 21 April 1994 and thereafter recaptured four times including the April 2003 recapture. All recaptures and resighting were at the same *Leonotus* clump at the Botanical Gardens during the April–May period.

The previous three recaptures were on 4 May 1996, 26 April 2000 and 9 April 2002. During all recapture dates the sunbird showed active primary moult (scores 32, 23 and 17 respectively) with an average mass of 15.6 g. In addition, a Fiscal Shrike (BB73315), *Lanius collaris*, ringed during 1989 by Deon du Plessis, was recaptured in September 2001 after 12 years and 7 months – probably a new record for the gardens!

Malachite Sunbirds are rarely recorded around Bloemfontein during summer and only few records are available (De Swardt 2001). The fact that the sunbird was recaptured at the same site in the gardens during April–May suggests that it was probably present during the other years when no ringing took place. This recapture has prompted me to urge other ringers (especially in the Free State) to try and catch as many Malachite Sunbirds as possible. I am planning to revisit my other study sites such as Kirklington near Ficksburg during June–July and will visit the Free State National Botanical Gardens annually (see also De Swardt 1998). You never know what recaptures will be waiting for me!

References

- De Swardt, D.H. 1995. Malachite Sunbird ringing in the Free State. *Safring News* 24: 15–18.
- De Swardt, D.H. 1998. Bird ringing at Kirklington, Ficksburg. *Mirafra* 15: 39–41.
- De Swardt, D.H. 2001. Preliminary observations on Malachite Sunbird movements in the Free State. *Ostrich* 72: 203–206.



Editor: The greatest elapsed time is only a few days more than Dawie's record: immature male AB59947, recaptured 10y 0m 14d after ringing at Olifantsbos, COGHRN, W Cape.