

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Quite a few finders of rings assume that the ring number is the postal code for Pretoria, or that it is the telephone number of the Pretoria Zoo. Some don't bother to write the ring number in their letter, or if they do, they don't give all the digits. Obviously we try to straighten the record out by further correspondence. Most finders are very helpful and some go to extraordinary lengths to redress the situation .....

Mr. Franklin Adjei,  
Gomoa Kumasi,  
Ghana

Dear Franklin,

Thank you very much for your letter which was sent to us by the Zoo in Pretoria. We are very interested in the bird you caught and would like some more information.

Do you still have the ring? If so we would like you to open the ring out so that it is flat and send it back to us with your letter. This is very important because it seems that you did not send all the numbers on the ring - the number you gave us was 51662. Secondly, could you tell me what colour the birds' legs were? This will help us to identify the bird if you do not have the ring to send us.

Yours sincerely,

T.B.OATLEY

Dear Sir,

I thank you for your reply letter and airmail which you posted it to me.

Please sir the bird is alive but the ring has got lose. The day that I caught the bird I remove the ring from the birds leg and put it in my room. One of my brothers want and took it. At that time then I wasn't there. So when I came back from school I want insid my room to see the ring. I haven't see so I ask my junior brother and he said to me that he took it but it got lose. When I hear that news I got annoyed so I beat him. Sir the colour of the bird is black and white and the leg is pink.....Sir I end here much kindly thanks to you.

Greetings to you

Amen

FRANKLIN ADJEI

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Mrs M Morris,

Muldersdrift.

Dear Mrs Morris,

Thank you for reporting to the Pretoria Zoo the finding of an injured House Sparrow with a ring.

The ring number supplied by the Zoo is AA 1958. According to our records this ring (actually AA 01958) was placed on a European Swallow in 1974. Whilst such a bird could still be alive, it appears highly unlikely that you would have confused a House Sparrow with a Swallow.

However, ring numbers AA 19581 - 19589 were affixed to sparrows of three different species (one of which was a House Sparrow), and it appears that the last digit of the ring number has been lost in the process of transcription.

Can you advise us of the fate of the sparrow, confirm its identification as a House Sparrow (Roberts No. 784) and, most important, provide any more information you can about the ring number? If you have the ring in your possession you could send it to us by opening it out to a flat rectangle and sticking it to your letter with some tape.

Yours sincerely,

T.B.OATLEY

Dear Mr. Oatley,

Thank you for your letter of 16th February. I would like to confirm the identification of the bird as definitely a male House Sparrow (Roberts No. 784). We have resident swallows nesting on the walls of our house and could not possibly confuse the two.

The ring number was AA 1958 - but perhaps the last digit was obscured or worn off.

The sparrow was found in my husband's studio eating dog cubes. It had no tail feathers and seemed unable to fly. We put it in the garden where unfortunately the dog pounced on it and injured it. We put it in a cage but it died a few hours later. We informed Pretoria Zoo but they did not tell us to keep the ring. So my small daughters gave it a ceremonial funeral with the ring still intact. I have been trying to sift through the soil where it was buried to recover the ring but unsuccessfully I'm afraid. I'm sorry about this but in future we will know what to do.

Yours sincerely,

MARLENE MORRIS

#### AN EXILED WEAVER

In February 1981 SAFRING received, via Pretoria Zoo, an air letter from an address in Holland, containing a flattened ring, number 2-67582. According to the records, this ring was affixed to a male Masked Weaver *Ploceus velatus* at Bird Haven, Melrose, Johannesburg, by Messrs. Hewitt and Piper.

The letter, handwritten in Dutch, reported that the bird had been killed by a cat, and the writer (whose signature was illegible) thought the Zoo would like to know how far the bird had travelled! A letter from SAFRING acknowledging receipt of the ring and requesting more information has never been answered.