

Dear Sir,

RE: NEED FOR ADDITIONAL RING SIZES

In ringing a fair number of the more common small passerine species I am firmly of the opinion that we do need at least two additional small ring sizes. The first, and I think the most needed, is a size between the existing 3,0 mm and 4,3 mm sizes. An aluminium and/or stainless steel ring with a 3,8 mm diameter would solve the problems that I frequently encounter when trying to neatly overlap a too large 4,3 mm for a number of species. Species such as the Blackeyed Bulbul *Pycnonotus barbatus* and Cape Bulbuls *Pycnonotus capensis*, Spottedbacked Weaver *Ploceus cucullatus*, flufftails, the Cape Rockthrush *Monticola rupestris* and the Fiscal Shrike *Lanius collaris* could be ringed to my satisfaction with this proposed new size. I have, for instance, ringed 19 (23%) of the Blackeyed Bulbuls with a 4,3 mm (which I had to overlap) and 65 (77%) with a 3,0 mm. Of this 65, I have recorded 15 as being a "snug" fit and the proposed 3,8 mm would have been a perfect fit.

I also believe that we need a ring size between the existing 2,3 mm and 3,0 mm. A 2,7 or 2,8 mm would probably do the trick and would solve the problem when one has to decide if a tight fitting 2,3 mm or a too large 3,0 mm should be used when ringing wagtails, Cape Robin *Cossypha caffra* and Natal Robin *Cossypha natalensis*, Lesser Swamp Warbler *Acrocephalus gracilirostris*, Rattling Cisticola *Cisticola chiniana* and Blackbacked Cisticola *Cisticola galactotes*, the Redcollared Widow *Colius passer ardens* and the Black Flycatcher *Bias musicus*, to name a few.

I hope that a closer look at the number of species and number of individuals which would probably be affected as well as the economics of introducing new ring sizes would prove these proposed sizes to be essential.

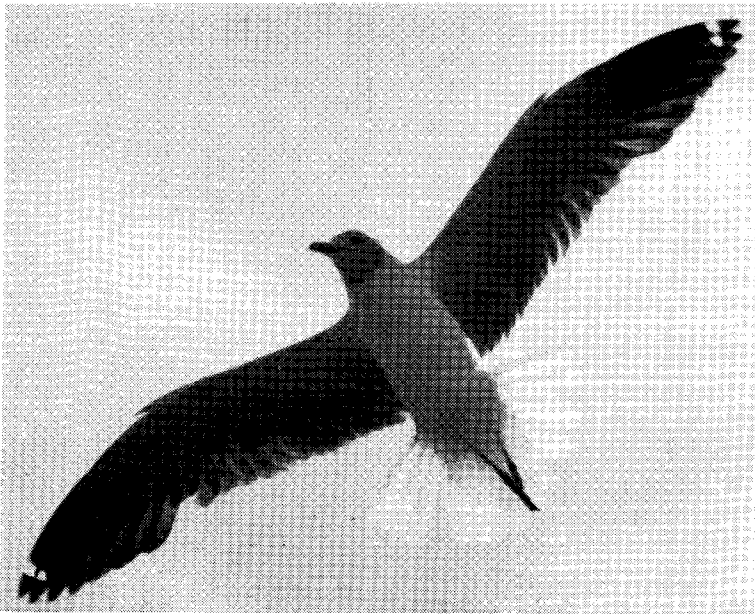
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*Editor's note:*

I would welcome further correspondence on this subject, plus lists of ring sizes appropriate for different species of birds where such sizes differ from those recommended in

the Ringer's Manual. It should be kept in mind that geographic and individual variation in the size of some species is a relevant factor. There is also the question of which fit poses a potentially greater hazard to a bird when available ring sizes are slightly small or slightly large. I personally believe that a loose-fitting ring is less of a risk provided it is properly butted and shaped, and there are plenty of long-lived Cape Robins with 3,0 mm rings on record. If there is sufficient demand for intermediate ring sizes, these can be introduced. However, any 'non-standard' size (i.e. size not used overseas) is liable to be expensive because of tooling costs which would be added to the normal costs of production.

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A Greyheaded Gull *Larus cirrocephalus* photographed by T. B. Oatley at False Bay, Lake St. Lucia, Zululand. The most widespread gull in Africa, it has attracted very little attention from ornithologists. Between 1957 and 1975, 6 159 chicks were ringed in South Africa mostly at inland colonies in the Transvaal (Benoni, Springs and Barberspan), and a total of 144 (2,3 %) have been recovered. Mean age of the oldest 10 % of these birds was 5,6 years with the longest surviving bird reaching 8 years.