

D.M. Skead

When Peter Milstein assumed duty as Officer-in-Charge at the Barberspan Ornithological Research Station in 1978, he initiated a Ring Stock Book (RSB).

The system, as initially developed, consisted of the following:

1. A separate section for each ring size.
2. Each page was divided into five columns
 - (a) Date received and from whom received.
 - (b) Prefix number/letter.
 - (c) Initial suffix number of a particular ring series.
 - (d) Final number of that series.
 - (e) Final date that last ring of a series was used.

The immediate advantage of this system, apart from orderly record keeping which is expected from any ringer, is that the remaining stock can be ascertained at a glance. It is important that new stocks be ordered timeously, especially when ringing on a large scale. A ringer can also see at a glance how many rings were used in a given period for future budgeting purposes. Another advantage is that queries from SAFRING headquarters about ring stocks issued to an individual ringer can be resolved quickly.

The system at Barberspan with all recaptured birds was to note each individual recaptured, regardless of the interval between the date of ringing and recapture or between recaptures. This led to a tremendous amount of data being gathered that was virtually useless, especially on long-lived species like the ducks and Redknobbed Coot *Fulica cristata*. Individual birds became 'trap happy' and they were entered almost daily. One female Southern Pochard *Netta erythrophthalma* was recaptured 290 times in one year at Barberspan!

Discussions with United States Fish and Wildlife Service waterfowl biologists led to several modifications of the Barberspan

waterfowl ringing programme. One point raised was that to work out mortality/survival of a species it is only necessary to enter those birds recaptured a year or more after the date of initial ringing.

This can cause a considerable delay in sorting out those birds to be entered each day when there are 100 or more recaptured birds. This problem was easily solved by using the RSB. As mentioned under item 2(e), the final date when each ring series is completed is entered in the RSB. The bird handler reads out the ring number of each recaptured bird and the person entering these data on the recapture schedule can tell at a glance from the RSB, to the nearest month, when the bird was ringed. The precise date of ringing can be obtained later.

The new system of recording only those birds that were ringed a year or more before the date of recapture means that in a three month period about 60 Yellowbilled Duck *Anas undulata* recapture entries are made instead of 1 000 or more. It also means that the birds can be returned much sooner to the pan.

Another advantage of the new system of using the RSB is that recaptures of birds ringed elsewhere are immediately noted. When ringing on a large scale and for a long period, as at Barberspan, it is impossible to remember all the ring combinations.

It is strongly recommended that those ringers who do not have a RSB should adopt a similar system. It certainly speeds up data processing, especially where large numbers of birds are involved.

D.M.Skead, Barberspan Ornithological Research Station, P.O.
BARBERSPAN, 2765

- o o o -