

## INDIAN-RINGED RUFF IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Wader ringers are always hopeful for the unexpected long-distance recovery or, less likely in the eastern half of Africa, a long-distance control. After 17 years of wader ringing and having only controlled Little Stints *Calidris minuta* from Kenya and Zaire, imagine my surprise on the night of 2 January 1984, when I was extracting a Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* from the net to see a rather tall, unfamiliar ring on the tibia/fibula. Quick checking showed it to be a Bombay Natural History Society ring but what puzzled me during examination was that the bird appeared to be, on plumage and leg colour, a first-year female and this was subsequently confirmed when I received the recovery printout (only one month later I may add - I wish that all ringing centres were as efficient) showing it to have been ringed as such on 27 September 1983 at Bharatpur, Rajasthan 27 15N; 77 30E, India.

The bird was caught during normal wader ringing operations at Steynrus Dam 33 33S; 26 54E in the eastern Cape and was my main consolation for missing all four Pectoral Sandpipers *Calidris melanotos* which were present at that time. Movement between Africa and India in the Ruff is not unprecedented, as a bird ringed in Kenya a few years ago was recovered in India in a subsequent season. Africa forms the major nonbreeding quarters for the Ruff but substantial numbers also winter in India and as both Indian and eastern/southern African birds originate from the more easterly Asian populations, it was likely that some interchange must take place. I would have thought, however, that this interchange would be more likely between different seasons than within one season and one can only postulate as to the route taken by this particular bird. A direct sea crossing from India to East Africa seems unlikely as this species does not normally occur on the islands of the Indian Ocean. The normal migration from eastern Asia almost certainly follows a great circle route keeping well to the north of the great fold mountain barrier that runs right across Asia so it seems strange that a bird that has gone to the trouble of crossing this mountain range should then continue on to Africa. The most likely route taken would be westwards along the coast through other small wintering quarters such as Oman, reaching Africa in the vicinity of the Gulf of Aden and thence along the normal migration route southwards. One wonders if this young bird has now 'fixed' on Africa as its permanent nonbreeding quarters for the future.

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