

EDITORIAL

SINGLE ISSUE OF VOLUME 18

Just when I thought that spontaneous inflow of copy for Safring News had reached a level that would ensure sufficient material for two regular issues each year, 1989 came along with an empty postbag. Under the circumstances we had no option but to opt for a 2-in-1 issue later in the year and to hope that the dearth of copy was only a temporary phenomenon. Fortunately some 'old faithfuls' have come to the rescue and made this issue respectable. At this stage though, I know of only one short article which I can reasonably expect to receive for Vol. 19, so those local readers who value Safring News should seriously consider supporting the magazine with copy.

Contributions don't all have to be mini-papers of ringing results; in fact, the greater the variety the better. I had expected that somebody might pen a reply to Warwick Tarboton's comments about the Great White Hunter Syndrome (Safring News 17 (2): 77-78), but not a single exclamation mark has been forthcoming in the form of hard copy. Does this mean that there are no dissenting opinions out there?

Anecdotal articles can be both entertaining and informative, and I happen to know that there are no shortage of anecdotes, so why not share them? Bird-ringers are akin to fishermen in several respects and are apt to allow their zeal to outweigh their discretion in their efforts to capture their quarry (epitomizing the Great White Hunter Syndrome?), with sometimes embarrassing results, like the ringer who single-handedly netted an automobile early this year. The net, which was almost brand new, had not been insured and was a total write-off! Before some readers express righteous indignation about the foolhardiness of trying to catch birds on public roads, remember that raptorphiles do it regularly with Bal-chatris, and many is the tale they could tell, if they chose.

Anecdotes from the lighter side of bird-ringing can do more than merely amuse; most incidents (which may be funny only in retrospect) derive from a series of events and circumstances which are innocuous in themselves; reading about them can often help to prevent a repetition.

MEASURED EFFORT RINGING

Please read the proposal on page 47 about a new project involving Measured Effort Sites. Expatriot BTO ringers will recognise the similarities to the 'Constant Effort Sites' scheme which has been running in the British Isles for a few years now.

Some ringers are already operating at regular sites and could involve themselves in this new project without changing their *modus operandi*. The success, or otherwise, of the project will depend, however, on the number of ringers who participate. It has the potential to add a new dimension to ringing activities and deserves serious consideration by all who are using mistnets.

END OF AN ERA

Dale Hanmer's paper starting on page 19 is appropriately titled, and I wish to pay tribute to her consistent ringing effort at Nchalo, Malawi, for over a decade. Her ringing and retrap schedules have always been models of accuracy and timeously submitted. Better still, she has consistently examined her retrap results, written up analyses every two years and submitted her papers for publication. Now, after having to wind up her Nchalo study, we are privileged to have the final results within weeks of the final netting sessions. (And because of our shortage of copy she has produced three other contributions as well). A hard act to follow, but an inspiring model for other single-site ringers.

The Nchalo retrap data set is the best of its kind we have and has contributed a great deal to our knowledge of survival potential of many Afrotropical birds. What a pity it could not have continued for at least another five years. However, we are left with some very interesting statistics and it will be of more than passing interest to see how the results of some South African ringing programmes with less diverse avifaunas compare, when (and if) they are kept running for as long as the Nchalo site.

In the meantime we wish Dale and her family well in their new surroundings and hope it will not be too long before Dale puts up her nets again.

Terry Oatley