

The recovery of a Lanner ringed in 1972, was reported from Zimbabwe in September 1989. Dr. R. M. Harwin provides the background to this interesting record.

Dear Terry

You might be interested in the story of 'my' Lanners. In 1972, a pair of Lanners laid five eggs in a window box on the eighth floor of Grindlays Bank Chambers, overlooking Cecil Square in Harare. Two eggs were infertile, but the other three hatched and in due course I ringed the nestlings. The two infertile eggs were taken by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife and were found to contain DDT residues.

In 1973 a different window box was used, and it is possible that a different female was involved. In 1972 the female was very trusting. In 1973 the male was bold and confiding, while the female was rather nervous, but this may have been because she had somehow injured one foot. She laid three eggs, but perhaps because of the foot injury, kicked two out of the nest. The third egg duly hatched and the chick, with no competition, grew apace and was ringed.

The Lanners returned in 1974 and the female laid a clutch of four eggs, all of which hatched, and all four chicks were ringed. The male bird was by now quite used to interference by myself (and others, who came to photograph the birds at close quarters), and would sit on the edge of the window box while the chicks were removed for ringing. His usual lookout post was on Regal Star House a block away, but when anybody opened the window to examine the nest, he would come to investigate. The same site was used for plucking the prey he caught; since this arrived at the nest minus feathers, identification was largely guesswork, but the main items seem to have been Laughing Doves, although there was an abundance of Feral Pigeons closer at hand.

The Lanners nested again in 1975, but that year National Parks and Wildlife decided to ring the chicks themselves. They did not return in 1976. The bird recovered in Seke, about 25 km to the south, in September 1989, was one of the first brood of three, and thus over 17 years old when it died.

While no Lanners have since been seen in central Harare, it is interesting that a pair of Peregrines have recently established themselves on the roof of Meikles Hotel, on the opposite side of Cecil Square to Grindlays Bank Chambers.

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