

REPORT ON THE 1990-1991 RINGING YEAR

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It seems only yesterday that I was compiling the 1989-1990 report (*Safring News* 20: 42-52, 1991). In reality it was six months ago, which means that this report is 12 months rather than 18 months behind the times. If those ringers who still have not submitted their schedules for the 1991-1992 year by the time they receive this issue of *Safring News* are reminded to post them in, I can compile the 1991-1992 report in time for publication in the next issue.

RINGING EFFORT

By July 1992, 97 ringers had submitted schedules for the 1990-1991 ringing year and the total of birds ringed for this period stands at 36 540. This is over 1 600 birds

less than the previous year (updated total 38 174). Were it not for the fact that the 1991-1992 total has already surpassed this figure I might be more concerned about the apparent downward trend. As it is, the 10-year trend line (Figure 1) is still upwards and, with a satisfying number of new ringers coming on-line, we may hope to reach the 50 000 level in the next ringing year or two.

Grouping of ringers' totals (including professional and institutional ones) from highest to lowest (Table 1) is similar to that shown in the previous report. The group totals are lower because there are fewer ringers per group except in group B. The reason for this seeming inconsistency is that two ringers had totals of 382 birds and it doesn't make sense in this sort of ranking to have the highest of one group equivalent to the lowest of the next one up. Besides, the Ringing Organiser may never again have such a successful ringing year: his previous best has been in the D group!

TABLE 1
BREAKDOWN OF RINGING EFFORT BY RINGER TOTALS

GROUP	RINGERS TOTALS		GROUP TOTAL	PERCENTAGE OF ANNUAL TOTAL	CUMULATIVE TOTALS	
	LOWEST	HIGHEST			PERCENTAGE	RINGERS
A	970	4 923	23 427	64,1	64,1	12
B	382	802	6 972	19,1	83,2	25
C	170	350	3 023	8,3	91,5	37
D	94	165	1 497	4,1	95,6	49
E	59	93	866	2,4	98,0	61
F	29	57	522	1,4	99,4	73
G	11	20	169	0,5	99,9	85
H	1	10	64	0,1	100,0	97

In fact it seems to have been a good year all round for the Cape, as shown in Table 2. By contrast, the Transvaal ringers did not fare so well. Natal has managed to retain the third place it achieved in the previous year. Zimbabwe is up to fourth and Malawi down to fifth; one might say that Malawi's loss is Zimbabwe's gain because Dale Hanmer is, predictably, back in the Top 20. But Mike and Teté Roberts have been away on long leave and that has certainly influenced Malawi's total ringing effort. There is one region fewer than in the previous year, because there are currently no active ringers in Mozambique.

quite manage 5 000 which was his target, but all will agree his total is very praiseworthy considering that it was achieved with straightforward mistnetting with no mass ringing involved, such as is the case, for example, at European Swallow roosts.

The first three spots in the Top 20 list are the same as in the 1989-1990 report, and thirteen of those mentioned were also listed in the previous report (and the one before that, though not all the same names). For all that, it is nice to see some new names; good efforts were turned in by David Philip (ex U.K.) and Robert Erasmus, both in the southern Cape, and Peter and Marilyn Bridgeford in the Namib-Naukluft Park in Namibia.

Table 3 lists the top 20 amateur ringers or ringing groups. George Underhill didn't

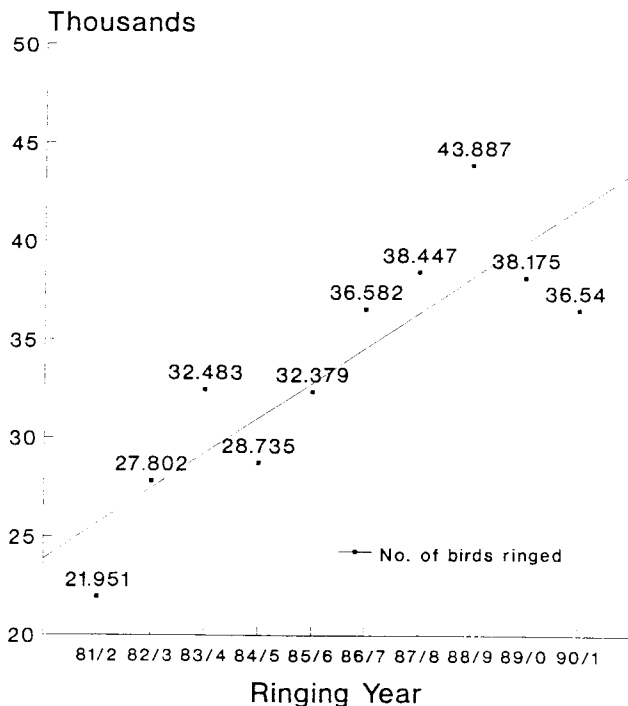


FIGURE 1
RINGING EFFORT FOR THE PAST 10 YEARS

TABLE 2

COMPARISON OF REGIONAL RINGING EFFORT IN THE 1990-1991 RINGING YEAR

REGION	NUMBER OF RINGERS RETURNING SCHEDULES	NUMBER OF SPECIES RINGED	NUMBER OF BIRDS RINGED	PERCENTAGE OF ANNUAL TOTAL
CAPE	32	187	15 974	43,7
TRANSVAAL	25	259	8 004	21,9
NATAL	9	163	3 718	10,2
ZIMBABWE	9	201	2 709	7,4
MALAWI	4	153	1 934	5,3
SUB-ANTARCTIC	3	10	1 842	5,0
NAMIBIA	6	88	1 561	4,3
ORANGE FREE STATE	8	65	762	2,1
MAURITIUS	1	3	36	0,1
TOTALS	95	479	36 540	100,00

TABLE 3

TOP 20 AMATEUR RINGERS OR RINGING GROUPS
IN THE 1990-1991 RINGING YEAR

RINGERS	REGION	NO. OF BIRDS RINGED
GEORGE UNDERHILL	SOUTHWESTERN CAPE	4 923
DAVE JOHNSON	NATAL	2 902
JOHN BUNNING	TRANSVAAL	1 520
MEDLAND & MALLALIEU	MALAWI	1 481
FRANK DOUWES	TRANSVAAL	1 265
TONY TREE	ZIMBABWE & E. CAPE	1 062
DALE HANMER	ZIMBABWE	1 049
KOBIE RAIJMAKERS	TRANSVAAL	1 004
MARIUS VAN ZYL	TRANSVAAL	992
DAVID PHILIP	SOUTHERN CAPE	727
SHONIE RAIJMAKERS	TRANSVAAL	673
PAUL MARTIN	EASTERN CAPE	667
DAWIE DE SWARDT	O.F.S. & TRANSVAAL	613
MIKE & LIZ FRASER	SOUTHWESTERN CAPE	562
ROD BRABY	NAMIBIA	482
PHOEBE BARNARD	NAMIBIA	463
ROBERT ERASMUS	CAPE	455
PETER & MARILYN BRIDGEFORD	NAMIBIA	451
ROY EARLÉ	TRANSVAAL	447
KOTIE HERHOLDT	NORTHERN CAPE	382

TABLE 4

TWENTY MOST-RINGED BIRDS (EXCLUDING SEABIRDS) FOR THE PERIOD
JULY 1990-JUNE 1991

1990/91 RANK	SPECIES	89/90 RANK	NO. OF RINGERS	SINGLE RINGER MAXIMUM	TOTAL
1	MASKED WEAVER	3	33	493	2094
2	CAPE WHITE-EYE	2	34	816	1682
3	EUROPEAN SWALLOW	1	24	388	1477
4	CAPE WEAVER	5	17	1016	1337
5	RED BISHOP	4	19	412	986
6	CAPE SPARROW	8	25	154	721
7	LAUGHING DOVE	7	32	155	543
8	CURLEW SANDPIPER	9	13	241	541
9	CAPE BULBUL	11	6	407	487
10	BLACKEYED BULBUL	10	26	157	471
11	L. D.C. SUNBIRD	13	11	332	471
12	YELLOWBILLED DUCK	-	1	416	416
13	CAPE SUGARBIRD	-	5	325	405
14	COMMON WAXBILL	-	22	249	356
15	OLIVE THRUSH	17	25	78	347
16	YELLOW EYE CANARY	-	16	218	332
17	MALACHITE SUNBIRD	14	14	154	319
18	LITTLE STINT	-	9	163	314
19	REDEYED BULBUL	-	10	177	314
20	W.B. CORMORANT	-	2	310	312

As in previous reports, the Top 20 Ringers list does not include the ringing totals achieved by professionals engaged in national or regional projects, the following of which would, if listed, rank in the top half of the list: Sea Fisheries Research Institute (3 800), Port Elizabeth Museum (2 000), Marion Island (1 521) and Barberspan Ornithological Research Station (802).

Table 4 lists the 20 most-ringed birds: seabirds are excluded because they are primarily the grist of official programmes, and the Cape Gannet and African (=Jackass) Penguin are always in position 1 and 2 (or 2 and 3 if there has been a lot of swallow ringing). In this review period the totals for gannets and penguins were 4 002 and 2 380 respectively. For several

years now the widespread and net-prone Masked Weaver and Cape White-eye have been at or near the top of the roster and it is always a toss-up which one will muster the higher total. Twelfth in the list in this report is the Yellowbilled Duck with 416 ringed by one ringer - in this case Keith Morgan at Barberspan. It may be a long time before any member of the Anatidae makes the Top 20 again because the Barberspan Ornithological Research Station has now been closed down after over 40 years of operation.

Table 5 shows convincingly what an advantage it is to dwell in a raptor paradise like the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park. The number of active ringers in the Bal-chatri brigade was 17 in this report period.

TABLE 5

TOP TEN FREE-FLYING RAPTORS CAUGHT IN 1990-1991 RINGING YEAR

SPECIES	TOTAL RINGED	NUMBERS OF RINGERS	RINGER WITH HIGHEST TOTAL OF THIS SPECIES
PALE C. GOSHAWK	125	9	KOTIE HERHOLDT (91)
ROCK KESTREL	90	6	KOTIE HERHOLDT (40)
GREATER KESTREL	51	8	KOTIE HERHOLDT (42)
STEPPE BUZZARD	49	6	MANFRED SCHMITT (21)
BLACK SH. KITE	47	7	TED ROBSON (25)
LANNER FALCON	43	4	KOTIE HERHOLDT (39)
JACKAL BUZZARD	34	6	MANFRED SCHMITT (26)
GABAR GOSHAWK	25	4	KOTIE HERHOLDT (22)
BL. BR. SNAKE EAGLE	19	2	KOTIE HERHOLDT (17)
DARK C. GOSHAWK	12	4	ALAN KEMP (4) MANFRED SCHMITT (4)

TABLE 6
 MOST FREQUENTLY RECOVERED BIRDS IN THE 1990-1991
 RINGING YEAR

SAFRING CODE	SPECIES NAME		TOTAL NO.
044	CAPE GANNET	<i>Morus capensis</i>	73
002	JACKASS PENGUIN	<i>Spheniscus demersus</i>	54
296	SANDWICH TERN	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	21
987	KING PENGUIN	<i>Aptenodytes patagonicus</i>	21
047	WHITE BR. CORMORANT	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	18
287	KELP GULL	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>	17
291	COMMON TERN	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	15
298	SWIFT TERN	<i>Sterna bergii</i>	13
080	WHITE STORK	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	11
317	LAUGHING DOVE	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	10
289	HARTLAUB'S GULL	<i>Larus hartlaubii</i>	9
543	CAPE BULBUL	<i>Pycnonotus capensis</i>	9
745	REDWINGED STARLING	<i>Onychognathus morio</i>	8
786	CAPE SPARROW	<i>Passer melanurus</i>	8
799	CAPE WEAVER	<i>Ploceus capensis</i>	8
803	MASKED WEAVER	<i>Ploceus velatus</i>	8
165	PALE C. GOSHAWK	<i>Melierax canorus</i>	6
294	ARCTIC TERN	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	6
368	SPOTTED EAGLE OWL	<i>Bubo africanus</i>	6
493	EUROPEAN SWALLOW	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	6
545	BLACKEYED BULBUL	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>	6
775	CAPE WHITE-EYE	<i>Zosterops pallidus</i>	6

RECOVERIES

Thirteen of the species listed in Table 6 were also among the most-ringed birds in

the previous two reports. Presence in Table 6 is a reflection of ringing effort, some of it recent (Redwing Starling) and some (like the Swift Tern) the subject of previous ringing programmes.

The following distant recoveries were received during the 1990-1991 ringing year:

Cape Gannet *Morus capensis*

9 74375 (Nestling)

Dead	11.03.91	Bird Is., Algoa Bay, E. Cape		
	23.04.91	Nossi-Be, Madagascar	1 mth	3 180 km

Our first recovery from Madagascar.

Southern Pochard *Netta erythrophthalma*

7 74872 (Adult)

Dead	18.07.89	Barberspan, Transvaal		
	08.06.91	Lake Naivasha, Kenya	23 mths	3 089 km

Drowned in fisherman's nets.

Knot *Calidris canutus*

4 19182 (Juvenile)

Dead, shot	25.03.79	Langebaan, Cape		
	19.08.90	Manche, France	137 mths	9 357 km

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

BB 77266 (Adult female)

Dead, shot	11.03.88	Kommetjie, Cape Peninsula		
	02.07.90	Taimyr Peninsula, Siberia	28 mths	13 425 km

European Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

AB 80139 (Immature)

Controlled	01.01.89	Windhoek, Namibia		
	18.08.90	Rossington, England	20 mths	8 641 km

AB 67666 (Age unknown)

Dead	08.01.89	Pretoria, Transvaal		
	15.05.91	Koscorow, Poland	28 mths	8 578 km

AC 12054 (Immature)

Controlled	23.02.90	Pietermaritzburg, Natal		
	28.04.91	Capraia Island, Mediterranean	14 mths	8 344 km

The following southern African recoveries were also of interest:

Reed Cormorant *Phalacrocorax africanus*

7 42723 (Nestling)

Dead	13.03.74	Barberspan, Transvaal		
	12.10.90	Katala, Zambia	199 mths	1 316 km

At 16,5 years this is the oldest Reed Cormorant on record.

Cape Griffon *Gyps coprotheres*

G 13930 (Juvenile)

	22.02.91	Potberg, Bredasdorp, Cape		
Alive but weak	13.04.91	Vryburg District, Northern Cape,	2 mths	922 km

Wahlberg's Eagle *Aquila wahlbergi*

8 39752 (Nestling)

	12.10.90	Mangeleti Game Reserve, Tvl		
Dead	29.03.91	Chengwe, Kadoma, Zimbabwe	6 mths	726 km

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

4 54890 (Adult)

	22.12.84	Steynsrus Dam, Port Alfred, Cape		
Dead	20.08.90	Norton, Zimbabwe	68 mths	1 773 km

Aside from the Reed Cormorant mentioned above, there was only one other really significant longevity record arising from this year's crop of recoveries. This was for:

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

40 38954 (Nestling)

	17.06.64	Grotlingboudd, Gotland, Sweden		
Found injured, wing broken, subsequently died	05.10.90	Bloubergstrand, Cape	316 mths	10 109 km

At 26 years and 4 months, this is the longest-lived Arctic Tern from Europe according to Roland Staa of the Swedish ringing scheme. The oldest Arctic Tern on record is a 33 year-old bird in North America.

RETRAPS

Due to staff shortage in 1991, I did not have the time to capture all the retrap data that was submitted. We are now catching up on this deficit, but I have concentrated first on the retraps resulting from mistnetting. To date we have a total of 833 retraps of 115 species (some of which are seabirds) in the databank for the 1990-1991 ringing year.

Table 7 lists the most commonly netted species. Remember that only birds retrapped 12 months or more after ringing are currently recorded on Schedule 2 forms, so the retrap totals are respectable. For interest I have included the greatest elapsed time from ringing to retrap for

each species for the present batch, so with the exception of the Cape Bulbul, the figure is not the highest on record.

The Cape Bulbul concerned in this case was originally ringed as an adult at Rondevlei Bird Sanctuary on the Cape Peninsula, so was probably in its 14th year when recaptured. The significant point about this particular bird is that this was its first recapture, despite a consistently high level of netting effort at Rondevlei over the years. Had it moved out of the area, and recently returned, or had it merely been spending its time around the corner and simply not frequenting the netting sites in the interim? Cases such as this show how inappropriate it may be to assume that uncaught birds have died or even that they

have left the area. At best we may expect that models based on ringing data consistently underestimate survival rates.

A total of 26 ringers submitted usable retrap schedules during the review period with the following ringers collectively contributing 80% of the records:

George Underhill	329
Frank Douwes	166
Tony Tree	82
Mike & Liz Fraser	61
Stewart Lane	35

Some who were able to retrap only a few birds contributed several interesting species, for example (elapsed time in brackets), Terrestrial Bulbul (47), Karoo Robin (51), African Marsh Warbler (100), Barthroated Apalis (58), Namaqua Prinia (28), Plumcoloured Starling (24) and Bronze Sunbird (82).

So please keep the retraps rolling in - every record contributes to the particular species total and brings closer the day when we can make meaningful (under)estimates of survival rates of these birds.

TABLE 7
MOST COMMONLY RECAPTURED BIRDS IN 1990-1991 RINGING YEAR

CODE	SPECIES NAME		TOTAL	LE T ¹
775	CAPE WHITE-EYE	<i>Zosterops pallidus</i>	102	75
803	MASKED WEAVER	<i>Ploceus velatus</i>	70	100
543	CAPE BULBUL	<i>Pycnonotus capensis</i>	66	149
799	CAPE WEAVER	<i>Ploceus capensis</i>	48	72
760	LESSER D. C. SUNBIRD	<i>Nectarinia chalybea</i>	47	77
763	WHITEBELLIED SUNBIRD	<i>Nectarinia talatala</i>	46	60
749	CAPE SUGARBIRD	<i>Promerops cafer</i>	43	57
317	LAUGHING DOVE	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	29	62
581	CAPE ROBIN	<i>Cossypha caffra</i>	22	69
651	SPOTTED PRINIA	<i>Prinia maculosa</i>	22	66
759	MIOMBO D. C. SUNBIRD	<i>Nectarinia manoensis</i>	22	61

¹ L E T = Longest Elapsed Time (months)