16 years of ringing at one site, provides an excellent model for other ringers to follow. The same comment applies to her papers on fidelity of migrants to non-breeding grounds (11:41-43, 18:33-42).

Bats
S. Sowler (7(2):32-33) marked some species of bats with incoloy bird rings, catching them with mistnets – we are not sure how this article crept into *Safring News!*

On a more serious note, there is a brilliant account by D.B. Hanmer (19:43-44) on how to deal with Epaulleted Fruit Bats *Epomophorus minor* in mistnets. The wingspan of males can exceed 0.6 m (what about *E. major*?). You simply let the bat hook its feet onto a finger, and it licks you while you disentangle it, "without any kicking, screaming or biting." Sounds easy, but takes a lot of courage.

Unexpected hazards
Woodpeckers' tongue tips get ensnared in Velcro (16:43).

Ticks can be vectors of Congo fever (16:50).

Leg cramps in waders can be treated with valium (22:33).

Mistnets are not strong enough to catch motor cars (18:1), tractors and cows, but do sometimes hold dogs (19:43-44). Members of the general public, especially ones armed with scissors, are not good for mistnets (20:58-60).

Rats and mice bite, and carpenter bees sting. But if the latter are left in the net they can rapidly destroy a square metre of it (19:44).

Puffadders get into crake traps and boomslangs can climb into mistnets (17:33-35).

The feathers and skin of the **Hooded Pitohui** *Pitohui dichrous* contain a similar poison to that of the Amazonian dart frogs used for blow gun darts. Fortunately the pitohui occurs in the forests of Papua New Guinea and is the first bird species known to possess a chemical defence, presumably to avoid predation by hawks, snakes and arboreal marsupials. The SAFRING Coordinator (22:32-33) suggested that if SAFRING ringers wanted to test if the species they handle had developed chemical defenses, they should suck the tails of mistnetted birds.

Dale Hanmer's 10 most dangerous birds weighing in at less than 100 g include **barbets, shrikes, kingfishers** and the needle-sharp claws of the **Rattling Cisticola** (20:61-62).

And then there are unpublished accounts of a ringer (male) who had a nipple nipped by a **Caspian Tern** and a ringer (female) who suffered a similar fate from the beaks of two successive **Jackass Penguins** she handled. Ouch.

AVOIDING DANGEROUS BEAKS

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I have been studying the Thickbilled Weaver *Amblyospiza albifrons* in Lydenburg for some time now. Besides wading through reedbeds in muddy water to, amongst other things, ring weaver chicks, I also ring adult weavers.

During the non-breeding season these weavers visit my garden to enjoy the sunflower seeds on my bird table. Having filled their crops, they head off again – some straight into my mistnet. At such times, a ringer needs to have three hands; one for holding the weaver's head with its beak pointing away from the other two hands extracting the bird from the net. To a certain extent I have mastered this problem with only two hands.

Having extracted the weaver from the net, it's rather easy to carry it to the ringing table – with two hands. The trick is to ring it, measure different body parts and take a bloodsmear! Thickbilled Weavers have powerful, heavy beaks for cracking stone-hard seeds. They have other uses too ...

While one hand is aiming at the rings on the table, the weaver's beak aims at tender human flesh, locking comfortably into it. Once having gained a hold, it cannot be persuaded to let go. Somehow you finally free yourself from it's beak but only for the time it takes the weaver to find another tender piece of human flesh!

On a good day I might be lucky enough to catch a couple of Thickbilled Weavers, plus the odd Barbet (Blackheaded or Crested). At the end of such a day my hands have blue blisters spread unevenly over them, making it look as though I have contracted a highly contagious disease.

I have been a victim of the above for one time too many. To escape the weaver beak, I take a suitable pill-container (Figure 1b) and ease it over the weaver's head (Figure 2). With the lid against the bird's back, I can ring and measure it and take bloodsmears. The container can be removed when taking head measurements because one has control over the head and beak while measuring it.

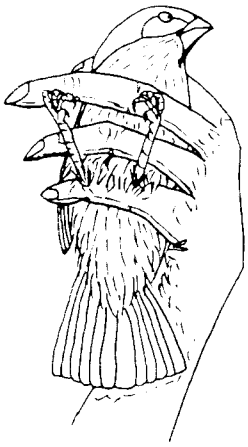

Figure 1a. Abnormal behaviour of a Thickbilled Weaver in a ringer's hand ...

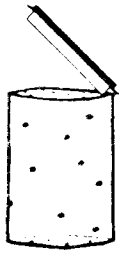

Figure 1b. Punctured pill-container

Figure 2. Positioned pill-container