Secondly, there is now a sound theoretical basis for choosing the most appropriate model. This is based upon a well-developed statistical procedure which has been tested for its applicability to the estimation of survival rates from ringing data.

A practical issue which will impact on ringers is that of primary data capture. It is now obvious from nearly a decade of intensive debate on the subject that national ringing schemes have to capture the primary ringing data collected by ringers, not just the recoveries. From experiments conducted in Europe, at some of the national offices, it has been found that if the ringers capture their own data (both primary ringing data as well as recaptures, controls, recoveries, etc.) then it is possible for the national office to increase its productivity (by an order of magnitude) while dramatically reducing its costs.

The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), the largest of the European ringing schemes and one of the largest in the world, is now moving in this direction. It has developed specialised software for ringers and provides training and support. In addition, it acts as a clearing house for old and redundant computers and channels them to ringers who cannot afford their own machines. I hope that SAFRING will follow this trend in the near future.

The EURING conferences are most productive and I hope to attend the next.

STORM PETRELS AT THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE

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My interest, like Les Underhill's (1993), was also drawn to the paper on tape-luring European Storm Petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* in Portugal by Harris *et al.* (1993) having as I do, some painful memories of this mildly esoteric pursuit.

In 1984, I obtained a continuous loop tape of European Storm Petrel colony calls from Bernie Zonfrillo, then secretary of the Isle of May Bird Observatory off the east coast of Scotland. Bernie had surprised everyone, but not, he always claims, himself, by catching "stormies" on the Isle of May within a few minutes of first turning on a tape there one August night. There had previously been a "few old records at the lantern [lighthouse]" and single records of the species in 1916, 1922, 1962 and 1971 (Eggeling 1985), so it could hardly be considered a common species; certainly few birders believed that it could be classified as any more than a vagrant to this well-watched isle. This was in the early days of tape-luring and ringers were only just beginning to realise what potential these tiny, nocturnal seabirds held and how abundant they, in fact, were at previously unrecognised sites. In the following years, the birds have proved themselves to be more than obliging and tens of thousands have been tape-lured and ringed at a string of headlands and islands off the British and European coastline well away from their breeding grounds.

I caught a few European Storm Petrels on the Isle of May in 1982, a fascinating experience. Thus inspired, I wondered if similar results could be had in the birds' southern hemisphere wintering grounds (waters?). Armed with Bernie's tape, tape recorder, car battery, speaker and 12 m mistnet, I installed myself for a few nights in January-March 1985 at Olifantsbos (34° 16'S, 18° 23'E) on the Atlantic coast of the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve. On ten nights, from 21h00 to 03h00, I caught nothing. On one night I caught a bat and, after another similarly unproductive night, I furled the net and removed the other equipment to the field centre nearby which served as my base. At 07h30 the next morning, I went to fetch my net and found that the fastidious reserve staff had

cleared it and the poles away, dumping them in a rubbish heap (comprising mainly rusty barbed wire and broken bottles) from which they had to be painfully extricated. On the next night the tape recorder somehow contrived to chew up the tape and I was obliged to spend some time back in Cape Town re-recording 40 minutes of calls from a snatch of stormie vocalisations on another tape. On my next nocturnal session at Olifantsbos the speaker packed up. Shortly afterwards, I reluctantly had to forsake the delights of the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve for Stellenbosch (not exactly renowned for its abundance of storm petrels), and that was that.

The thought that these birds can be caught on the Peninsula continues to niggle me and it would be nice, given the right equipment and conditions, to make another attempt to lure them at the reserve. An ideal site, to my mind, would be the carpark at the Cape of Good Hope itself (not to be confused with Cape Point). This is flat, accessible and positioned at sea level as far southwest on, not just the Peninsula but the whole African continent as one can get. A major problem is the Southeaster, which renders mistnetting impossible for days on end, and the noisy crashing of the waves which would muffle the output from all but the most powerful speaker. Nevertheless, autumn is the calmest season of the year and, most importantly, European Storm Petrels have been seen here at this time less than a kilometre from the shore (P. Cardwell, pers. comm.).

It would also be feasible to lure Wilson's Storm Petrels *Oceanites oceanicus*, which are abundant to the point of plague proportions off the Cape in winter. However, the chances of a ringing return of this species are, if not zero, then at least as near that figure as makes little difference. This contrasts sharply with the remarkably high level of retraps and recaptures obtained of European Storm Petrels in the northern hemisphere, and the relatively high numbers (for such a small pelagic bird) of recoveries from South Africa (22 up to 1991; Mead & Clark 1993). There is also the chance of catching something unusual, such as Blackbellied Storm Petrels *Fregetta tropica* which also closely approach the Cape in autumn; and who knows what they're up to after dark? A petrelling team at Tynemouth on the northeast coast of England achieved international stardom by catching a series of enigmatic dark-rumped storm petrels. Detailed analysis of plumage and measurements (Bretagnolle *et al.* 1991) and DNA fingerprinting from blood samples have since shown these to be Swinhoe's Storm Petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* which breeds in Japan, Korea and China, migrating to the northern Indian Ocean in winter! The authors speculate upon an undiscovered breeding colony in the North Atlantic as the source of their birds. There is always the chance that something similarly mind-boggling might be persuaded to come ashore at the Cape, but European Storm Petrel alone would be enough to make the exercise worthwhile and exciting.

Ringing at the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve, and entrance to the reserve after dark, requires the permission of the owners of the reserve, Western Cape Regional Services Council. There must be numerous other sites along the west coast that would be suitable – the Slangkop lighthouse at Kommetjie, for example, or further north at Cape Columbine. The advantages of the Cape of Good Hope, however, are its accessibility and after-dark security. One of these days it would be nice to report the control of a Scottish-ringed stormie at the "Cape of Storms"!

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