

BC23226 adult F	01.08.93	Ficksburg, Free State		
Killed by cat	14.01.95	Ficksburg, Free State	17 mths	0 km
<b>Redbilled Quelea <i>Quelea quelea</i></b>				
AD66469 adult F	17.04.94	Ventersdorp Dis, N W Province		
Deliberately poisoned by aerial spraying	12.01.95	near Tuinplaas, Northern Province	9 mths	297 km
AD85714 adult F	20.08.94	Ventersdorp Dis, N W Province		
Deliberately poisoned by aerial spraying	18.01.95	near Tuinplaas, Northern Province	5 mths	297 km
<b>Stripebreasted Seedeater <i>Serinus reichardi</i></b>				
AB88548 adult F	30.06.90	Ngapani, Malawi		
Control	11.04.95	Ngapani, Malawi	58 mths	0 km
<b>Pintailed Whydah <i>Vidua macroura</i></b>				
AC17803 adult F	25.06.91	Rondebult Bird Sanctuary, Gauteng		
Killed by cat	07.01.95	Alberton, Gauteng	43 mths	13 km

## EUROPEAN MARSH WARBLERS ON THE CAPE PENINSULA

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With Dawie de Swardt having taken the commendably bold step of initiating the SAFRING truth commission and confessing that his Karoo Chats *Cercomela schlegelii* were actually Whitethroats *Sylvia communis* (De Swardt 1993), we report here the mistaken identity of European Marsh Warblers *Acrocephalus palustris* in the southwestern Cape. As extra-limital records and an interesting turn of events in the use of ringing data, we would have reported this event in due course anyway (honest, m'lud).

On each of 31 January and 1 February 1992, we mistnetted a small *Acrocephalus* warbler while targeting Malachite Sunbirds *Nectarinia famosa* at a patch of flowering Wild Dagga *Leonotus leonorus* at Olifantsbos (34°16'S,

18°23'E) in the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve. The reserve list, somewhat surprisingly, cannot boast African Marsh Warbler *A. baeticatus*, but as it is a common enough bird in suitable habitat elsewhere on the Peninsula we assumed that our birds were this species. Without scrutinising them to any degree beyond basic measurements and scoring moult, therefore, we ringed and released them and duly celebrated an addition to our "patch" list. The fact that the birds were relatively large and in heavy moult should, however, have set alarm bells ringing as the diminutive African Marsh Warbler does not moult in South Africa but at its central African wintering grounds. Blissful in our ignorance, however, we dutifully completed our ringing schedules and moult cards and submitted them to SAFRING.

In due course the cards were forwarded by SAFRING to JMH (Kobie) Raijmakers who was studying moult in migrant warblers. He took one look at the details of our birds and contacted us suggesting, very gentlemanly, that the Olifantsbos birds were, in fact, Euro-

pean Marsh Warblers. His detailed arguments were based on the fact that our birds were too big for African Marsh Warblers and that they do not moult in South Africa. He reports that of the 200+ African Marsh Warblers he has caught, none was moulting. Our birds had primary moult scores of 21 and 15, in other words were a third to almost halfway through their wing moult. This fits in almost perfectly with the state of moult of European Marsh Warblers in the Transvaal around the same date. All in all, it looked like we'd made a southern bobou. Our birds can be seen in context when compared to those measured by Kobie (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Measurements of European and African Marsh Warblers from the Transvaal (means from JMH Rajmakers) and European Marsh Warblers from Olifantsbos.

	European Marsh	African Marsh	Olifantsbos birds
Wing (mm)	66,9 n=60	58,9 n=218	64,0; 64,0
Mass (g)	11,9 n=58	10,0 n=234	12,6; 13,1

The longest primaries of our birds were old and very worn but, even so, the wing length is clearly in the European Marsh camp. The masses, similarly, qualify our birds as the latter in their fat pre-migratory condition, and we are happy to accept them as this species.

The occurrence of Palearctic migrants far to the south and west of their recognised ranges in southern Africa is not unprecedented. The likes of Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* and Redbacked Shrike *Lanius collurio* have been recorded at Olifantsbos. The Icterine has also found its way into a mistnet (Fraser 1986). A series of records of Garden Warblers *Sylvia*

*borin* from the peri-urban area of Cape Town by George Underhill and Colin Martin (Underhill 1992; C Martin pers. comm.) add to a putative record from Franschoek in 1985 (Martin 1986), extending the range of this species by a thousand kilometres or more. The European Marsh Warbler has been recorded on the Cape south coast at Sedgefield (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1987) and in the western Cape at Somerset West in February 1993 (Martin 1993). So ringers should not automatically assume that small *Acrocephalus* warblers in this region are African Marsh. We now carry a copy of Joris Komen's (1988) useful identification article in our ringing box just in case a European Marsh Warbler should again deign to drop into our nets. Having taken such precautionary measures this will, of course, ensure that we never catch another one.

We are most grateful to Kobie Rajmakers for pointing out our misidentification and providing details of the species. We thank Western Cape Regional Services Council for permission to ring at the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve.

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