Sexing of the Cape White-eye *Zosterops pallidus*

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According to Svensson the shape of the cloacal protuberance of certain birds can be used as an indicator to sex the bird (Identification Guide to European Passerines 1992; B.T.O.).

It was found that in the case of the Cape White-eye, a monomorphic species, this method is applicable during the breeding season and can be used to sex these birds with great success.

In the male Cape White-eye the cloacal protuberance becomes very enlarged during the breeding season, reaching a diameter of approximately 6 mm and a height of also 6 mm (Figs 1–3). The cloacal protuberance normally points upwards and usually has a fold between the cloaca and the abdomen. In most cases there is also some feathering on the fold.

In the case of the female Cape White-eye the cloacal protuberance points backwards and no fold is present, the abdomen tapering towards the vent which also points backwards (Figs 4–6). No feathers are present on the abdomen which is often swollen, wrinkled and vascular. The vent itself being visible between the feathers that surround it, in the male the feathers around the vent are usually longer and thus obscure the vent.

This technique can be used during the breeding season with a high degree of confidence.

Fig. 1. Male Cape White-eye.

Fig. 2. Male Cape White-eye.

Fig. 3. Male Cape White-eye.

Fig. 4. Female Cape White-eye.

Fig. 5. Female Cape White-eye.

Fig. 6. Female Cape White-eye.

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A notice to wader watchers

In Western Europe and North America, the proliferation of colour-ringing as a tool to identify populations, age groups or individuals of many wader species, has meant that the use of the tarsus for this purpose has been extended to the use of the tibia/fibula as well.

Watchers tend to check for rings only on the tarsus, but recent observations of Turnstone and Sanderling in Namibia showed evidence of the growing tendency to place rings on the upper leg. In addition, the use of colour rings is further supplemented by incorporating the metal ring into the sequence of colour rings. Finally, colour flags have recently been included as well.

A Turnstone seen near Swakopmund, in March 1999, was thought initially to have only colour and one metal ring but on closer observation, with telescopes, one of the colour rings was seen to be a colour flag. The sequence thus shown was: blue – left tarsus, yellow – right tibia, white flag over metal – right tarsus (see pp. 3–8). Please ensure that the right and left legs are correctly identified (this can be a problem sometimes when the birds are seen side-on) and that rings/flags are read and recorded from top to bottom.

In summary, enormous care needs to be taken to ensure the correct reading of the placement of all rings/flags. The west coast is the most likely venue for the sighting of birds from the North Atlantic and sightings could also possibly extend to birds such as Grey Plover, Red Knot, Curlew Sandpiper and Bartailed Godwit. However, inland, an eye should be kept open for Wood Sandpipers ringed in eastern Europe.

Any sightings should be sent to SAFRING at the following address:

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Tel: +27-21-650 2421/2; Fax: +27-21-650 3434
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