

General

Analysis of ringing records at Witsand

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RAINFALL

The Northern Cape had experienced its heaviest rainfall for many years. The average annual rainfall in the Witsand Nature Reserve is 285 mm; Table 1 shows monthly rainfall since January 2000, and the annual rainfall since 1994.

GENERAL STATISTICS

A total of 2656 birds were ringed over the period 4–12 March 2000 during the Ringers' Training Course (Table 2). Most birds were ringed at or near Witsand (2832S 2228E to 2834S 2229E). The Sociable Weavers and Redbilled Queleas in the 'Elsewhere' column were ringed on farms neighbouring Witsand. The most ringed species at or near Witsand were Sociable Weavers (867), Red Bishops (245) and Redbilled Quelea (131). The former was ringed at several colonies, while the latter two species were roosting at Pepler's Hole in the dunes. The most frequently ringed species at Ou Murasie Farm on the Orange River (2852S 2201E) were Cape White-eyes (344) and Masked Weavers (79).

Table 1. Annual rainfall 1994–1999, and monthly rainfall January–April 2000.

| 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 |
|---------|----------|-------|-------|------|------|
| 245 | 126 | 289 | 485 | 202 | 364 |
| January | February | March | April | | |
| 70 | 131 | 107 | 57 | | |

Some of the raptors were ringed en route to or from Witsand, and were trapped at varying distances from the reserve. The plovers and stilts were ringed at Pudu Dam (2748S 2243E), west of Sishen. Nocturnal trips resulted in owls and a nightjar being trapped.

There were 176 retraps, including birds retrapped on the same day, but not all ringers recorded retraps. The highest retrap percentages are for Red Bishop (23%) and Whitebrowed Sparrowweaver (20%). Not much can be obtained from the retrap data except for the Red Bishops at Pepler's Hole. On 6 March 188 Red Bishops were ringed. On 8 March 56 new Red Bishops were ringed and 60 were retrapped. The total population can thus be estimated from the Lincoln Index at $N = (188 * 116)/60 = 363$ birds.

Two birds have been recovered since the workshop. Cape Wagtail BB27359 was shot on 21 March on a nearby farm and Longbilled Crombec AE45628 drowned in a trough at the Jessnitz' house on 10 September 2000.

SYNCHRONISATION OF MOULT

The core of the range of the Sociable Weaver *Philetairus socius* lies in the Northern Cape, extending into Namibia and southwestern Botswana (ASAB2 534–535). The Witsand Nature Reserve lies near the southern limit of the range, and there were many active colonial nests in the reserve and adjoining farms. There are three Sociable Weaver colonies inside Witsand, and three on two neighbouring farms, where ringing occurred. Mist-netting was undertaken at 6 nests, and 659 birds were caught and measured, and a fur-

Table 2. Birds ringed at Witsand Nature Reserve, Ou Murasie Farm and elsewhere during the Ringers' Training Course 4–12 March 2000, and birds retrapped.

| SAFRING | Species | Scientific | Total | Witsand | Ou Murasie | Elsewhere | All retraps |
|---------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|-------|---------|------------|-----------|-------------|
| 122 | Greater Kestrel | <i>Falco rupicoloides</i> | 6 | | | 6 | |
| 126 | Pygmy Falcon | <i>Polihierax semitorquatus</i> | 3 | | | 3 | |
| 130 | Blackshouldered Kite | <i>Elanus caeruleus</i> | 1 | | | 1 | |
| 161 | Little Banded Goshawk | <i>Accipiter badius</i> | 1 | 1 | | | |
| 165 | Pale Chanting Goshawk | <i>Melierax canorus</i> | 29 | 1 | | 28 | 2 |
| 217 | Kori Bustard | <i>Ardeotis kori</i> | 1 | | | 1 | |
| 224 | Redcrested Korhaan | <i>Eupodotis ruficrista</i> | 2 | 2 | | | |
| 238 | Threebanded Plover | <i>Charadrius tricollaris</i> | 7 | | | 7 | |
| 242 | Crowned Plover | <i>Vanellus coronatus</i> | 1 | | | 1 | |
| 245 | Blacksmith Plover | <i>Vanellus armatus</i> | 3 | | | 3 | |
| 270 | Blackwinged Stilt | <i>Himantopus himantopus</i> | 2 | | | 2 | |
| 275 | Spotted Dikkop | <i>Burhinus capensis</i> | 1 | | | 1 | |
| 307 | Namaqua Sandgrouse | <i>Pterocles namaqua</i> | 1 | | | 1 | |
| 314 | Redeyed Dove | <i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i> | 1 | | 1 | | |
| 316 | Cape Turtle Dove | <i>Streptopelia capicola</i> | 1 | 1 | | | |
| 317 | Laughing Dove | <i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i> | 52 | 29 | 9 | 14 | 1 |
| 318 | Namaqua Dove | <i>Oena capensis</i> | 17 | 8 | | 9 | |
| 348 | Jacobin Cuckoo | <i>Clamator jacobinus</i> | 1 | 1 | | | |
| 352 | Diederik Cuckoo | <i>Chrysococcyx caprius</i> | 1 | 1 | | | |
| 365 | Pearlspotted Owl | <i>Glaucidium perlatum</i> | 5 | 2 | | 3 | |
| 368 | Spotted Eagle Owl | <i>Bubo africanus</i> | 2 | | | 2 | |
| 372 | Rufouscheeked Nightjar | <i>Caprimulgus rufigena</i> | 1 | 1 | | | |
| 385 | Little Swift | <i>Apus affinis</i> | 2 | | | 2 | |
| 391 | Whitebacked Mousebird | <i>Colius colius</i> | 31 | 31 | | | 2 |
| 392 | Redfaced Mousebird | <i>Urocolius indicus</i> | 39 | 39 | | | |
| 397 | Malachite Kingfisher | <i>Alcedo cristata</i> | 4 | | 4 | | |
| 401 | Greyhooded Kingfisher | <i>Halcyon leucocephala</i> | 1 | | | 1 | |
| 432 | Pied Barbet | <i>Tricholaema leucomelas</i> | 57 | 45 | 2 | 10 | 1 |
| 440 | Greater Honeyguide | <i>Indicator indicator</i> | 1 | 1 | | | |
| 442 | Lesser Honeyguide | <i>Indicator minor</i> | 4 | 1 | 3 | | |
| 447 | Goldentailed Woodpecker | <i>Campethera abingoni</i> | 1 | | | 1 | |
| 450 | Cardinal Woodpecker | <i>Dendropicops fuscescens</i> | 1 | 1 | | | |
| 459 | Fawncoloured Lark | <i>Mirafra africanoides</i> | 2 | 2 | | | |
| 460 | Sabota Lark | <i>Mirafra sabota</i> | 1 | 1 | | | |
| 466 | Clapper Lark | <i>Mirafra apiata</i> | 2 | 2 | | | |
| 493 | European Swallow | <i>Hirundo rustica</i> | 2 | 1 | | 1 | |
| 502 | Greater Striped Swallow | <i>Hirundo cucullata</i> | 1 | | | 1 | |
| 514 | Ashy Tit | <i>Parus cinerascens</i> | 15 | 15 | | | 1 |
| 531 | Cape Penduline Tit | <i>Anthoscopus minutus</i> | 1 | 1 | | | |
| 544 | Redeyed Bulbul | <i>Pycnonotus nigricans</i> | 129 | 77 | 46 | 6 | 6 |
| 553 | Olive Thrush | <i>Turdus olivaceus</i> | 10 | | 10 | | |
| 564 | Mountain Chat | <i>Oenanthe monticola</i> | 1 | 1 | | | |
| 570 | Familiar Chat | <i>Cercomela familiaris</i> | 4 | 4 | | | |
| 575 | Anteating Chat | <i>Myrmecocichla formicivora</i> | 2 | | | 2 | |
| 581 | Cape Robin | <i>Cossypha caffra</i> | 9 | | 9 | | |
| 583 | Karoo Robin | <i>Erythropygia coryphaceus</i> | 1 | 1 | | | |
| 586 | Kalahari Robin | <i>Erythropygia paena</i> | 9 | 9 | | | 1 |

| SAFRING | Species | Scientific | Total | Witsand | Ou Murasie | Elsewhere | All retraps |
|---------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| 595 | Garden Warbler | <i>Sylvia borin</i> | 5 | 5 | | | 1 |
| 596 | Icterine Warbler | <i>Hippolais icterina</i> | 2 | 2 | | | |
| 599 | Willow Warbler | <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i> | 1 | 1 | | | |
| 604 | Cape Reed Warbler | <i>Acrocephalus gracilirostris</i> | 2 | | 2 | | |
| 606 | African Marsh Warbler | <i>Acrocephalus baeticatus</i> | 40 | 3 | 37 | | 1 |
| 609 | African Sedge Warbler | <i>Bradypterus baboecala</i> | 1 | | 1 | | |
| 621 | Longbilled Crombec | <i>Sylvietta rufescens</i> | 8 | 6 | | 2 | |
| 646 | Levaillant's Cisticola | <i>Cisticola timmiens</i> | 2 | | 2 | | |
| 650 | Blackchested Prinia | <i>Prinia flavicans</i> | 21 | 17 | 4 | | |
| 653 | Namaqua Warbler | <i>Phragmacia substriata</i> | 2 | | 2 | | |
| 654 | Spotted Flycatcher | <i>Muscicapa striata</i> | 8 | 5 | | 3 | |
| 658 | Titbabbler | <i>Parisoma subcaeruleum</i> | 56 | 55 | | 1 | 8 |
| 661 | Marico Flycatcher | <i>Melaenornis mariquensis</i> | 2 | 2 | | | |
| 665 | Fiscal Flycatcher | <i>Sigelus silens</i> | 13 | 11 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 674 | Pirit Batis | <i>Batis pirit</i> | 13 | 9 | | 4 | |
| 686 | Cape Wagtail | <i>Motacilla capensis</i> | 9 | 8 | 1 | | 1 |
| 707 | Fiscal Shrike | <i>Lanius collaris</i> | 1 | | | 1 | |
| 708 | Redbacked Shrike | <i>Lanius collurio</i> | 8 | 6 | | 2 | |
| 711 | Crimsonbreasted Shrike | <i>Laniarius atrococcineus</i> | 4 | 4 | | | |
| 714 | Threestreaked Tchagra | <i>Tchagra australis</i> | 1 | 1 | | | |
| 735 | Wattled Starling | <i>Creatophora cinerea</i> | 1 | 1 | | | |
| 737 | Glossy Starling | <i>Lamprotornis nitens</i> | 27 | 26 | 1 | | 2 |
| 755 | Marico Sunbird | <i>Nectarinia mariquensis</i> | 3 | 3 | | | |
| 764 | Dusky Sunbird | <i>Nectarinia fusca</i> | 3 | 2 | | 1 | |
| 775 | Cape White-eye | <i>Zosterops pallidus</i> | 344 | | 344 | | 2 |
| 780 | Whitebrowed Sparrowweaver | <i>Plocepasser mahali</i> | 58 | 53 | | 5 | 12 |
| 783 | Sociable Weaver | <i>Philetairus socius</i> | 867 | 462 | | 405 | 53 |
| 784 | House Sparrow | <i>Passer domesticus</i> | 16 | 15 | 1 | | 2 |
| 786 | Cape Sparrow | <i>Passer melanurus</i> | 33 | 1 | 32 | | |
| 787 | Southern Greyheaded Sparrow | <i>Passer diffusus</i> | 4 | | 4 | | |
| 803 | Masked Weaver | <i>Ploceus velatus</i> | 97 | 18 | 79 | | 10 |
| 805 | Redbilled Quelea | <i>Quelea quelea</i> | 150 | 65 | 19 | 66 | 4 |
| 808 | Red Bishop | <i>Euplectes orix</i> | 267 | 245 | 22 | | 63 |
| 830 | Melba Finch | <i>Ptyilia melba</i> | 8 | 7 | | 1 | 1 |
| 837 | Redbilled Firefinch | <i>Lagonosticta senegala</i> | 9 | | 9 | | |
| 840 | Violeteared Waxbill | <i>Uraeginthus granatinus</i> | 9 | 9 | | | |
| 841 | Blackcheeked Waxbill | <i>Estrilda erythronotos</i> | 7 | 4 | | 3 | |
| 843 | Common Waxbill | <i>Estrilda astrild</i> | 7 | 1 | | 6 | 1 |
| 846 | Pintailed Whydah | <i>Vidua macroura</i> | 3 | | 2 | 1 | |
| 847 | Shafttailed Whydah | <i>Vidua regia</i> | 1 | | | 1 | |
| 860 | Blackthroated Canary | <i>Serinus atrogularis</i> | 24 | 22 | 2 | | |
| 861 | Blackheaded Canary | <i>Serinus alario</i> | 1 | | | 1 | |
| 865 | Whitethroated Canary | <i>Serinus albogularis</i> | 1 | 1 | | | |
| 866 | Yellow Canary | <i>Serinus flaviventris</i> | 2 | 2 | | | |
| 871 | Larklike Bunting | <i>Emberiza impetiani</i> | 34 | | 1 | 33 | |
| 872 | Rock Bunting | <i>Emberiza tahapisi</i> | 9 | | | 9 | |
| 873 | Cape Bunting | <i>Emberiza capensis</i> | 3 | 1 | | 2 | |
| Totals | | | 2656 | 1352 | 650 | 654 | 176 |

Table 3. Adult Sociable Weaver mean moult scores and sample sizes at 6 colonies.

| | Colony | | | | | |
|------------------|--------|------|----------|------|------|------|
| | 1 | 2 | Brulsand | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Mean moult score | 23.7 | 24.0 | 20.0 | 25.7 | 23.4 | 25.0 |
| Sample size | 145 | 30 | 122 | 92 | 27 | 15 |

ther 208 birds were captured incidently, mainly at waterholes.

Over the first week in March, most Sociable Weavers (adults and juveniles) were moulting the sixth primary feather ($n = 116$), with a range from the third to ninth primary. Five of the six colonies were closely synchronised, with mean moult scores for adults ranging between 23.4 and 25.7 (Table 3); this means

that these colonies were at the same stage of moult to about one-fifth of a primary. One colony had a mean moult score of 20.0 which means that it was lagging behind the other colonies by almost one primary feather.

Similarly, most Whitebrowed Sparrowweavers were moulting the sixth primary feather ($n = 24$), with a range from the fourth to eighth primary.

TRAPPING A KORI BUSTARD WITH A TORCH AND HANDNET

Rihann Geyser

On 12 March, the last day of the Witsand Ringing Workshop, Gareth Hazell and I were on our way to the Padkloof ringing site when we saw a Kori Bustard walking in front of us on the road. Since it was still very dark we decided to take our chances with catching the bird: 'we will never know if we don't try!'

I walked next to the car while Gareth slowly drove towards the bird. At this stage the Bustard was in the long grass next to the road. I switched on my little torch and Gareth switched off his bakkie's main lights. I walked slowly towards the big bird shining the light straight in its eyes with the handnet in my other hand. Surprisingly, when I was about two metres from the bird it started walking slowly towards me.

When we were about one metre apart I put the net over the bird and at the same time grabbed its sides to prevent the bird from opening its wings. The bird struggled a bit.

So there I was on my knees holding on to the bird and trying to get Gareth's attention to come and help so the Bustard would not tear Gareth's net. After about 10 seconds which felt like an hour Gareth popped out of the bakkie and asked: 'Have you got it?' (he couldn't see me because the bakkie's nose was elevated due to a pile of sand next to the road). 'Yes, I've got it, come and help me!'

We managed to get the bird safely out of the net, took it to the car and laid it on its back on the table. After ringing it with a 19 mm ring, we released the bird and it walked off slowly as if nothing had happened. It let go a huge 'bollie' as it walked away. Luckily the bird kept it in while we were ringing it. We drove on, forgetting to put the table back in the bakkie due to all the excitement. Imagine the next person's reaction to seeing a table in the middle of the road with not a soul in sight! Well, someone scored a table!