

LOCAL NEWS

STAFF AT NUBRA

After a period of employing temporary staff, NUBRA is settled again with the arrival of the new full-time secretary, Miss Barbara Castle. During the Christmas vacation, three students were employed at the Unit. They proved very useful and did a lot of good work.

If any students, who are qualified ringers, particularly from the Transvaal or Natal, are interested in vacation work on ringing data, they should contact the Ringing Officer, NUBRA.

ETHIOPIAN RINGING

A circular issued by the Ringing Organizer for this region includes the following information.

Number of birds ringed in 1972 - 6244 of 271 species, including White Pelican 95, Black Kite 13, Common Sandpiper 104, Reed Warbler 148, Willow Warbler 349, African Sandmartin 197.

A Greater Flamingo ringed as a chick in Iran, was recovered about one month later in Ethiopia. A Lesser Black-backed Gull, and a Caspian Tern both ringed in Finland were also recovered in Ethiopia.

KNOT AGAIN AND TWO WADERS FROM IRAN

A Knot controlled at Langebaan late in 1972 was found to be carrying a Hiddensee East German ring. It was ringed on the Wismar-Bucht (54.02N: 11.30E) as a first year bird in 1966.

A letter arrived from Iran reporting the recovery of two S.A.-ringed birds on the edge of the Caspian Sea late in 1972. One was a Curlew Sandpiper ringed at Kommetjie, Cape Peninsula, by Hans Pfister on 11.3.72, the other a Bar-tailed Godwit ringed at the Swartkops estuary, E. Cape by Tony Tree on 23.3.71.

BET HASHITTA ISRAEL, NUMBER 1

Letters reporting the recovery of White Storks are more or less routine, but one sending in a stork ring found in Hankey, near Port Elizabeth was unusual to say the least. The ring was obviously home-made and inscribed Bet Hashitta, Israel I. No such ring address was known to me so I spoke to an Israeli friend on the U.C.T. campus. He put me in touch with Azaria Alon, a well-known natural history broadcaster who lives in the kibbutz Bet-Hashitta. I received the following reply.

Dear Sir,

You can hardly imagine how excited I was on receiving your letter (let us forget for a moment that it came in the middle of the panic over the booby-trapped letters - a too heavy envelope with a hard piece of metal inside...). Fortunately, I can give you the information about that curious ring.

The bird (a white stork, as you assumed correctly) was found wounded in Bet Hashitta in the spring of 1965, on its migration northwards. My colleague, Shabtai Levi, biology teacher at our school, took care of the

bird and cured it. When it could fly again he improvised a ring, ringed the stork and set it free, forgetting all about it. The end of the story is well known to you.

Kibbutz Bet Hashitta, of which I am a member, is situated at 35.26E: 32.33N, 15 miles south-east of Nazareth, 20 miles south-west of Tiberias and 8 miles west of river Jordan. We are very near to the Jordan Valley, which is part of the great rift, and therefore - on a main route of migration of many species of birds. Between us and the Jordan there are thousands of acres of fish ponds, and twice a year great flocks of storks pass from July to October due south, and from March to May due north. In our collection we have two rings found on dead storks in our area - both from Helgoland.

Yours sincerely,

AZARIA ALON,
Secretary, Society for the Protection
of Nature in Israel.

INFORMATION PLEASE

Information on the weights of Ground Woodpeckers (R445) and Knysna Woodpeckers (R448) is required by Warwick Tarboton, (P.O.Box 77, Olifantsfontein, Transvaal). He is doing a broad study on African woodpeckers - their geographic distribution and ecology.

The catching of the two species mentioned should tax the ingenuity of ringers. Clearly in-the-hand information on woodpeckers is generally lacking and ringers should take as much data in the way of moult, weight, and measurements from any woodpeckers they catch. The above data are also required by Dr. Short of the American Museum, New York, who is co-operating with Mr. Tarboton in this study.

Correct Channels for Communication with NUBRA

It has been suggested that some amateur ringers may not be aware of the correct channels through which they should refer any formal requests or complaints about NUBRA and the way ringing is organized.

Any minor requests can be referred direct to the NUBRA Ringing Officer. Every effort will be made to put any error right and direct contact with NUBRA is likely to produce the quickest response.

However in the event of a serious complaint, it is pointed out that the S.A.O.S. has two alternative representatives on the Steering Committee which is the governing body of NUBRA. The reps. are Mr. Hans Pfister (c/o All General Engineering Co. Ltd., Kanarie Road, Landsdowne, Cape) and Mr. Clive Hunter (P.O. Box 67158, Bryanston, Transvaal).

The correct channels are:-

1. Raise the matter with NUBRA either directly or through your Branch Ringing Organizer.
2. Contact your S.A.O.S. representative and ask for the matter to be raised at the next Steering Committee meeting.

RUSSIAN RECOVERIES

The latest letter from Miss Lebedeva, Responsible Officer of the Ringing Centre, Moscow, contained 19 recoveries including 17 European Swallows and two waders. The swallows included one to Leningrad (59.28N; 33.50E) and one near Slavgorod (53.00N; 78.37E), both ringed at Melrose Bird Sanctuary,, Johannesburg, by Deryck Day.

The two waders were:-

Curlew Sandpiper (R.251) - 2-41939,
Ringed: 27.12.70, Paarden Eiland, Cape Town, (M.Waltner: W.Cape Wader Group)
Recovered: 6.6.72 (shot) near Kyusyuv, Bulun District (70.37N; 127.48E).

Sanderling: (R255) - 2-46091
Ringed: 22.4.72, Langebaan, Cape (C. Elliott: W.Cape Wader Group)
Recovered: 13.6.72 (shot). Dikson Island, (73.25N; 80.38E).

The Sanderling is particularly interesting since it was recovered only just over 7 weeks after ringing and well within the Arctic Circle. It was one of a group of 14 ringed in one evening (the only ones of that species ringed by me that season). The birds were very fat, the one recovered being the heaviest of all at 91 gms. They all showed traces of breeding plumage. The one recovered had 5% while others, up to 25% breeding plumage.

MILLIONTH BIRD AWARD

The provisional grand total of species ringed with S.A. rings, at the end of the 1971/72 season stands at 638549. It seems that the seasonal increase is about 10% per season. It is therefore likely that we will reach the million mark sometime in the 76/77 season. We feel that this momentous occasion as judged by schedule return, should be marked with some sort of award. Suggestions would be welcome. Of course, we hope that ringers will not rush off to ring even more birds. We stick to the opinion that in most cases, the fewer and more details the better.

NEW PROJECTS RECEIVED:

The following is a list of new projects received which is provided for the information of all ringers. Not all have been necessarily approved by the Steering Committee or issued with free rings.

	<u>Species</u>	<u>Ringer</u>	<u>Project</u>
R.242	Crowned Plover	K. Edwards	Seasonal movement, ageing and sexing methods, population size.
61	Cattle Egret	E. Malherbe	Post-nestling movement from colonies along the Vaal River.
97	Red-billed Teal	P. Woodall	Distribution, movements, longevity (part of an MSc. study on the species' ecology).
	Various	A. Berruti	Study of the behaviour of different species while being handled. Physiological study of birds during capture and ringing studies.
Norwood,	Rulawayo	I. Milton	A community study with special emphasis on Cut-throat Finches.

NUBRA is prepared to send photocopies at cost to any ringer, professional or amateur who may be interested in the full details of papers outlined here.

MAKING AND REPAIRING MIST-NETS

With the current price of mist-nets from the British firm, Bridport and Gundry, being very high (60' x 9' x 1½" goes currently for R14.32) perhaps it is time that ringers paid more attention to repair techniques. A limited stock of repairing twine and a few needles is available at NUBRA. It is hoped to carry an article on repair techniques in the future.

Meanwhile, the latest issue of the B.T.O. Ringers Bulletin (Vol.4(2):21) carries an article on making your own nets. Apart from price, the advantages of making your own nets are that you can pick your own net height, length and shelf number. If any ringers are interested in the method, please write to NUBRA and a photocopy of the details will be supplied.

While on mist-nets, what about the differences between nylon (Japanese) and terylene (British) nets. My own experience is that the terylene nets are softer and the mesh material thicker, with the result that cutting of birds wings is very infrequent. I find the Japanese nets (which are cheaper) less durable and the material thinner and harsher on the birds, producing more frequent damage. I would be interested in comments on the two types of net especially by people who regularly use both. Perhaps for certain species, eg. swallows, the Japanese nets are quite sufficient?