

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

Contratulations on the successful launching of Safring News. It meets that urgent need for contact between ringers as outlined in your Editorial.

Shortly after it was published, for example, I received a letter from Miss Deane of Oranjemund reporting that, during the latter half of December, she had observed a Cape Teal there marked with a nasal marker bearing a number. Having just read Mr. Heñl's article on the colour-marking of waterfowl I was able to pass the information to the right quarters immediately. The duck, we were advised, has been released at Rockerspan, Velddrift, on 14 November, 1972.

I found all the articles in this issue most interesting and informative and am looking forward to future issues.

Yours sincerely,

G. D. Underhill,
12 Roseberry Road,
MOWBRAY, Cape.

Sir,

It was very pleasant to read the first number of Safring News. I hope to get from you the next numbers, too. I shall send all the numbers of Loodusvaatlusi to you when they will be published. Hope you have received the first two numbers of it - Loodusvaatlusi 1970 and Loodusvaatlusi 1971.

Yours,

T. Kastepõld,
Matsalu State Nature Reserve,
203190 Lihula,
Estonia, USSR.

Sirs,

Congratulatory! There can be few ringing schemes whose first bulletin could compare with Safring News Vol.1 no.1. Of course time will tell whether the small number of ringers in southern Africa will be able to keep up a flow of contributions. I sincerely hope that everybody will write in regularly with a note on his activities.

Two comments: rapid monitoring and publishing in Safring News of certain overseas information would be advantageous. I read only the other day that a number of Buteo buteo were marked with plastic wing tags in the British Isles in 1971. This type of information should be circulated in southern Africa so that we would take a good look at every Buzzard.

Colour-marking of Palaearctic migrants falls in the same category. Secondly, could we not have the postal address of the author of an article in Safring News? The author's name and address could come at the end of the article, and would make it possible for readers to correspond with the author if they wished.

Yours etc.,

John Ledger (W.B.C.)
Box 1038,
JOHANNESBURG.

Sir,

Thank you for my copy of Safring which I think is an excellent publication, just what is needed to keep S.A. ringers in the picture. I would suggest any interesting recoveries could be mentioned, eg. the Knot from East Germany.

With reference to the extract from British Birds about a Reed Warbler singing in a mist net, I have found that Bully Seedeaters nearly always sing in the net often attracting other individuals of the same species. This sometimes results in several birds being caught, they also sing in holding boxes while awaiting processing and on a few occasions, they have continued to sing in the hand while being ringed.

I think this is displacement activity as I have noticed it throughout the year, not only in the breeding season. Yellow Canaries also do this sometimes though not as often as the Bully.

The Knot very often calls whilst in a holding box, but I have not heard any other wader calling whilst being ringed.

Yours sincerely,

GEOFF WILSON,
5 Brentwood,
Blaauwberg Road,
Table View, Cape.

Sir,

Comments to: Swan or Reed Warbler Song (Safring News, page 28)

During the years 1960 to 63, when I was ringing quite a lot of Reed Warblers at Jsmaninger Teichgebiet near Munich, Germany, it happened to me twice that a Reed Warbler Acrocephalus scirpaceus started singing in the hand while being ringed. There was no other warbler present and I can not give any explanation for this behaviour. On this occasion I want to mention too, that some other Reed Warblers just fainted during ringing and when they were put on a table they were just lying around with eyes half-closed and it took some time before they flew away. The birds appeared healthy before and after their 'fit'.

M. B. Schmitt,
98 The Sentinel,
28 van der Merwe St.
Hillbrow, JOHANNESBURG.

Sir,

I am writing for the following reasons.

1. To congratulate you on the production of Safring which is an excellent innovation. I would be particularly keen to see an article by one of the experienced ringers on techniques in raptor trapping with special reference to the Bal-chatri technique which I am hoping to use in my study of Buteo augur in the Matopos. I can't find anybody locally who can help me.

2. I was particularly interested in your note "Forest Mist-Nets" in Foreign News. I have just returned from a trip to the Haroni-Lusitu Junction where I carried out intensive ringing in one forest patch. I was soon aware that my nets being only 12' high was going to mean that I would not trap certain canopy species. Fortunately I had two 150' climbing ropes, slings and karabiners with me so using climbing spikes I put slings round high forks about 50' in two forest trees on either side of a forest opening. Using karabiners as pulleys I threaded one rope through each and looped the mist net loops onto the trailing rope. The knot was similar to that used in 'prussicing' in mountaineering in that when you release the pressure pulling from the net it is loose and can be slid up and down the rope to the required position, but when the net is pulled tight it grips the rope and cannot move up or down.

By pulling on the one trailing rope I could move the net, correctly spaced out for "bag", up into the canopy. I put two nets on in series as Whitaker did. The result was a wall of net, adjustable from ground level to 50'. My own high net gave poor catches but this is a true reflection of the bird densities in this particular forest patch. Ploceus bicolor was the only species that I caught with the high net but not with ground nets. The ringing results in general were interesting; I get good series of Ispidina picta, Smithornis capensis, Phyllastrephus flavostriatus, P. debiles & Hypargos niveoguttatus among others. Pitta angolensis was an "unusual catch". I am intending to trap again in the same patch next year.

Yours sincerely,

Ian A. W. Macdonald,
Matopos Research Station,
P. Bag K5137,
Bulawayo.