

## LOCAL NEWS

### NEW WORKING GROUPS FORMED

As a result of discussions held at the S.A. Wildlife Management Association Symposium in Pretoria in June this year, two new Working Groups have been set up. The first of these concerns game birds (Convenor: Dr. Nolly Zaloumis, 29 Musgrave Centre, Musgrave Rd., Durban) and the second, vultures (Convenor not yet established). The idea of these working groups is to coordinate research of these species including ringing studies and to organize the exchange of information between members.

### NEW RING NOW AVAILABLE

Following observations of the extremely rapid corrosion of aluminium or monel rings on small waders such as the Little Stint (Ring Size: 2,3mm I.D.), NUBRA now has supplies of 2,3mm stainless steel rings especially for this purpose. Except for a few recoveries made from studies by Mr. Middlemiss at Rondevlei in the 1950's, the number of recoveries of stints is very few. From now on, we should be able to see if this is due to the rings falling off within a few months of being attached, or is really because the birds migrate and breed in very remote areas.

### TRANSVAAL ACTIVITIES

The first five months of 1973 were filled with more action by Transvaal amateur ringers than at any time previously. Since the Northern Transvaal Ornithological Society re-declared its independence from the Witwatersrand Bird Club some years ago, there resulted a lack of contact between ringers based in neighbouring cities, which many of us felt should be remedied. Accordingly, on 27th January some 27 ringers and interested persons met at the University Experimental Farm in Pretoria to discuss matters of mutual interest. This stimulating, and at times controversial, meeting had several important results, briefly reported here.

The first resolution was that the Ringing Officer of NUBRA should be asked to visit the Transvaal to meet amateur ringers. Clive Elliott kindly agreed to come up in April, and it was left to the N.F.O.S. and W.B.C. to arrange two days of activities. The W.B.C. organised a formal meeting on the 14th April in Johannesburg, at which all Transvaal amateurs who had registered projects were asked to talk about their work. Although the W.B.C. Ringing Committee was a bit apprehensive about what sort of reaction this proposal would have, all fears were unfounded and the afternoon was an unqualified success. Clive Elliott sat up front in the 'hot seat' with the Chairman of the meeting, and following the presentation of each group of projects, participated in the discussion and gave his views as to how projects could be modified or improved on. A total of 23 project titles were listed in the programme and it is probably right to say that all of us were impressed by the wealth of data collected and the potential of the Transvaal amateur ringing effort. The meeting was of great

value to all who took part, as it provided the opportunity to set our thinking straight on just how our individual projects are best carried out. The formal session was followed by an excellent braaivleis and beerdrink and thanks go to the organisers of the whole business - we hope it will become an annual event.

The next day was arranged by the N.T.O.S. at the University Experimental Farm in Pretoria. The morning was spent handling and processing birds caught in mist nets, informal discussions with our Ringing Officer and looking at the equipment and ringing kits brought along by various people. Everybody was interested in John Lodder's ring dispenser - perhaps John will give details of this titillating device in a forthcoming SAFRING News?

Another result of our January meeting was a discussion between representatives of the N.T.O.S., the W.B.C. and the Transvaal Provincial Administration on permit application by amateur ringers. Agreement was reached on a number of points and we now have a workable system that allows for two kinds of independent ringers, the A permit-holder, who may ring any species in the Province and the B permit-holder, who may ring a selected group of birds. We hope that any prospective Transvaal ringers who have been holding back because of the permit system will now go ahead and obtain their qualifications.

The final important event was the formation of the Transvaal Raptor Group to bring together all those in the Province who are interested in birds of prey. Several amateurs have been trapping and ringing raptors for some years and it was thought important to bring everybody together from time to time in order to exchange information, build up a central information bank of publications and references and to collaborate on joint projects, since the number of raptors that can be captured by the individual is usually fairly small, and more significant samples will obviously be obtained by pooling data. The T.R.G. is fortunate to have Dr. Alan Kemp as convener and the first meeting was held at the Transvaal Museum in Pretoria on 5th May. While the group is initially Transvaal-orientated, Alan would welcome contact with ringers elsewhere who are interested in raptors; the address is P.O.Box 413, Pretoria.

Report from: John Ledger, W.B.C.,  
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JOHANNESBURG.

#### S.A.O.S. SUPPORT FOR KENYA RINGING

Kenya ringers recently asked for support from all bodies with a direct or indirect interest in African birds. They have discovered that the flood-lights used at the Ngulia camp in the Tsavo National Park, for night-time game-spotting, act like a lighthouse to migrating birds. After cloudy or rainy nights, the dawn reveals the bushes almost crawling with migrants like Whitethroats, Thrush Nightingales and Red-backed Shrikes. Presumably the birds have been attracted in the murky conditions by the lights. The birds then move off shortly after dawn. The trouble is that Tsavo also crawls with elephants and the latter do not mix well with mist-nets. The Kenyans were requesting funds to help construct an ele-

phant-proof ditch around the main catching area, so that their ringing can proceed uninterrupted. The S.A.O.S. Council decided to give a donation to the construction of the ditch.

#### BESOEKER KOM VAN VER



"Kathy Wehmeyer (sien foto) van Velddrif en haar sussie het sowat twee weke gelede op 'n voël met 'n geskiedenis afgekom. Die voël 'n sterretjie (in Engels bekend as turn) is in 'n gewonde toestand naby die Velddrifbrug gevind. Aan sy poot is 'n ring met die woorde daarop: Inform British Museum London S.W.7, D.S.70407. Die Weslander het dadelik met voëldeskundiges in Kaapstad en op Stellenbosch in aanraking gekom wat op hulle beurt gedoen het wat op die ring gevra word. Ons hoop om spoedig meer oor dié voël te wete te kom. Inmiddels word die sterretjie se gebreekte vlerk en enkele wonde op Velddrif gedokter."

Van die Februarie, 1973 uitgawe van 'Die Weslander.'

Die bogenoemde voël is bering as 'n nesteling by Sheelah's Island, Ierland op 30.7.71.

#### EUROPEAN SWALLOW STUDY

Abstract: Age ratio, body weights and moult patterns were examined in a migratory population of Hirundo rustica L. in the Central Transvaal. The data obtained are compared to observations made of other populations in their wintering quarters. The central Transvaal population showed some differences which are probably related to differences in the Palearctic origins of the various wintering populations.

(Ref: Mendelsohn, J.M. (1973) - Ann. Trans. Mus. 28(6) ; 79-89)

#### W. CAPE WADER STUDY GROUP

A summary of ringing outings reveals a successful 72/73 season but also shows up the hard work involved.

105 outings have been reported, bringing in a total of about 3 120 palearctic waders. This is 30 birds per outing. It sounds very efficient but a further analysis of the catches will give an idea of the enthusiasm our members need. 884 wader and 50 60' x 3 shelf nets had to be erected for the total catch. Transforming the 3-shelf nets into wader nets gives an extra 300 nets, making it 1 184 wader nets in all. This gives 2,7 birds per net or 11 nets per outing. A figure of birds per square foot of net will not be given as this may discourage some of the would-be ringers or even some of the older members. Add to this the time involved and the fact that for more than 2/3 of the catch a trip of 80 miles one way had to be made and you have a real discouraging picture. Specializing in one type of wader is even more time-consuming. 6 trips specially made to catch Sanderlings, one of our more common waders, brought in 59 birds or 9 birds per outing. Further figures are 12 nets per outing and 3,8 birds per net.

In spite of this it is felt by all members, that a highly successful season has just ended. This is mainly due to the fact that cooperation between members of the W.C.W.G. on and off the field has been without fault. Work and knowhow have been pooled and a good basic knowledge of our more common waders has been acquired. Big numbers of birds are ringed by all ringers participating in the outing regardless from which nets the birds are taken out. Checking the nets is done in turns. Small catches may be ringed by one man only, the other members supplying the nets and helping out with the moult-cards. This sort of cooperation has encouraged all the members in our group and may be heartily recommended for others as well.

Report from: M. Waltner,  
5 Montagu Way,  
PINELANDS,  
Cape.

#### W.B.C. AWARD



Mr. Norman Elwell hands the W.B.C. Ringing Award to Des Hewitt (Left)

At a meeting of Witwatersrand Bird Club ringers held on 21st July in Johannesburg, the Annual Ringing Award was presented for the first time to Mr. A. D. S. Hewitt. The award was designed and made by several of the ringers themselves. The owl is made from old rings, flattened, polished and cut and is imbedded in clear plastic. The plaque is mounted on a teak base. From now on, the current holder of the award must decide to whom the trophy will be passed at a meeting held in July each year.

In presenting the award the Chairman of the W.B.C., Mr Norman Elwell said that Des Hewitt was a particularly deserving recipient. For the past 10 years he had been Branch Ringing Organiser and through his meticulous and efficient administration had guided the Club's ringers through a difficult period. Furthermore, through his direction of the European Swallow project, during which more than 40 thousand birds were ringed, Des had made the name of the W.B.C. known to ringers and ringing administrators throughout Europe. He wished Des many more years of healthy and productive ringing.