

EDITORIAL

QUALITY NOT QUANTITY

One of NUBRA's aims, since its inception, has been to try to stimulate a change of attitude in ringers' approach to their work. The basic point has been to try to get away from the 'ring-and-fling' mentality and to move towards purposeful ringing. The basic motivation is two-fold. First is the cost factor, the obtaining of reasonable scientific return for the investment entailed in running the Unit. These costs are partly related to the recovery rate of the birds being ringed. Thus garden-bird ringing is probably the least 'economic' since it often involves little scientific return and more work from a high recovery rate of birds devoured by the neighbour's cat etcetera. The second factor is that if ringers are carrying out purposeful ringing, then it is likely that they will ring less birds than if they ring randomly. One of the problems facing bird-ringing schemes the world over, is to prevent themselves from being swamped by too much data. Various techniques have been used to reduce the numbers ringed to manageable proportions such as increasing ring prices, banning the ringing of certain species, only allowing project ringing and so on. In South Africa, the problem has not yet developed though, if the latest increase of 16.2% per season is maintained, it soon will. The introduction of the project system was one way of increasing productivity and some of the results have already appeared in the pages of SAFRING and we hope many more will follow. Outside the project system, what we would like to see is for every bird ringed to be weighed and every bird to be inspected for moult (primary as a minimum). If you have not got the time, as some ringers have suggested, then you should cut down on the number of birds you are handling. Obviously this suggestion is inappropriate to some studies, but it is applicable as a general rule. If such a procedure becomes standard, we will be getting more out of our ringing for the efforts we put in. If it helps to keep the number of birds ringed down without affecting research activities, the day when numbers of birds ringed will have to be directly controlled will be delayed for a long time.



The Editors of SAFRING and the Staff of NUBRA
wish you a happy Christmas and the best for
1974.