

## LOCAL NEWS

### RECOVERY REPORTS

When a recovery of a dead bird is reported to the NUBRA offices, the apparent cause of death is coded. Part of the code refers to the state of the bird i.e. whether it was freshly dead or not, dead some days, long dead or skeletal remains only. NUBRA would be grateful if all recovery reports from ringers and ringing stations included this information.

### EXTRA WING FEATHERS

#### 1. Laughing Dove

In Safring News 2 (3) 1973 : 24, there appears a report extracted from Der Ornith. Beobach 70 : 19-26 regarding a captive Collared Turtle Dove Streptopelia decaocto which was found to have 11 primaries on one wing and 10 on the other. This report stimulated me to check my data after having examined the wing and tail moult of 1 170 Laughing Doves Streptopelia senegalensis during the past 20 months. On investigation I found that 10 birds displayed abnormal numbers of remiges or rectrices. The details are as follows:-

<u>Ring Number</u>	<u>Abnormality</u>
539-155	14 tail feathers
539-168	11 primaries on each wing
539-231	11 " " " "
539-290	14 tail feathers
539-444	9 primaries on each wing
539-458	11 primaries on right wing - 10 on left wing
539-494	13 tail feathers - no empty quill sockets found
551-963	14 tail feathers
552-164	13 tail feathers - no empty quill sockets found
552-176	11 secondaries on each wing

The normal number of primaries is 10, secondaries 10 and tail feathers 12.

Clive Hunter, P.O.Box 67158, Bryanston, Transvaal.

#### 2. Wood Sandpiper

In the Foreign News Section of the latest Safring News 2(3) 1973 :24, mention is made of "extra" primaries in doves. On 3rd February 1973 I caught a first year Wood Sandpiper at Lake Mellwaine with 11 primaries in each wing. This is the only bird handled out of tens of thousands over the last 17 years of ringing that has been noted to have this numerical aberrancy in the primary feathers.

Tony Tree (Address elsewhere)

### MARKING BLACK EAGLES IN THE MATOPOS

Details are given of the problems encountered in colour-marking Black Eagles so that the mark lasts a reasonable time and is visible both in flight and when the bird is perched. (No doubt suggestions would be welcome- Ed.).

(Ref:Gargett, V. Honeyguide 76:26-31)

### NEW 5.25 mm RINGS

As a result of requests for a ring which is a better fit for the widely ringed Laughing Dove, a new ring of Internal Diameter 5.25mm has been introduced. The ring material is Incoloy and

therefore the ring will also be suitable for birds living in corrosive environments, especially waders. Comments on how the new ring works under field conditions will be gratefully received at the NUBRA office.

#### S.A.O.S. FUNDING FOR PROJECTS

The S.A.O.S. Council has agreed to allocate some accumulated funds to the support of amateur bird projects which are either purely scientific or have a conservation element or both. Presumably amateur ringers are eligible for financial assistance with any aspect of their projects whether it is rings, mist-nets, transport or other costs. Applications should be sent to the Secretary, S.A.O.S., P.O.Box 3371, Cape Town. People in some financial need or those carrying out expensive projects are presumably more likely to receive grants than others. The closing date for applications is 1.8.74.

#### PIGMY KINGFISHER MIGRATION

The migratory movements of this kingfisher Ceyx natalensis in Zaire are described.  
(Ref:Prigogine,A. - Bull. B.O.C. 93 (2):82-89)

#### RETRAP OF BRITISH KNOT

Does the western population of Knot migrate as far as South Africa? Unless we retrap birds ringed in Greenland or Iceland we cannot prove this, but a recent retrap at Langebaan, W.Cape suggests that western birds do reach our coasts. The bird was ringed as an adult on 31.7.1973 at North Wootton on the Wash, Norfolk and was retrapped at Langebaan on 23.12.1973. But a note accompanying the ringing details reads as follows, "because the wing and bill of this bird were unusually large compared to the rest of the catch, the measurements were double-checked". It is suggested that the larger Knot come from the eastern population and that these only reach Britain as stragglers. The chances of retrapping in South Africa any of the thousands of Knot ringed in Britain are considered small since the great majority of their birds will be of the western population which are thought to winter mainly on the North Sea and possibly as far south as West Africa.

With the W.Cape Wader Group Knot catch (500 +) for this season, already exceeding the grand total ringed before in South Africa, we hope that more data will soon accumulate to clarify the above hypothesis.

M.Waltner (5 Montague Way, Pinelands, Cape)

#### CROCODILE RECOVERY OF A NIGHT HERON

A letter was recently received from Citoyen Kaseke Kabeya of Zaire, reporting the recovery of a bird-ring 7-29541 in the stomach of a crocodile. The finding place on the River Dikulwe, in the Mitwaba Region, ca. 8.38 S ; 27.20 E. The bird was ringed in October 1972 at Westdene, Benoni, Transvaal.

The mode of recovery is, as far as we know, unique. A brief look at the literature, showed a paper by H.B.Cott (Trans.Zool.Soc. Lond. 29:221-337) on birds (unringed) in crocodile stomachs. Species found included:- Reed Cormorant, Darter, Pelican, Purple Heron, Yellowbill Duck, Cape Turtle Dove and weaver spp.

#### CANNON-NET SUCCESS

There are now three cannon-nets in operation in southern Africa,

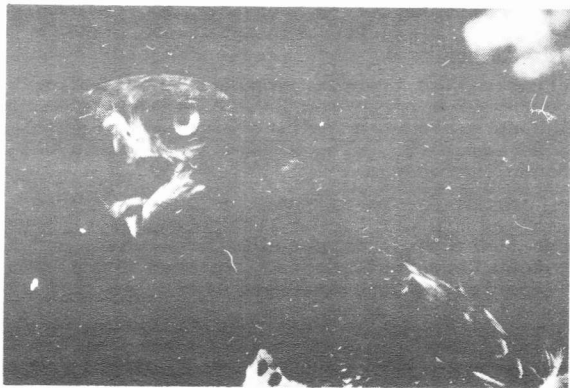
the Mundy vulture cannon, the Clarke Ibis cannon, and the NUBRA cannon. The latter had a successful firing on 9.2.74 and reckons now to hold the All-Southern-African record for the most birds caught with one shot. The catch totalled 57 including 23 Common Terns, 30 Sanderlings, 1 Knot, 1 Little Stint, 1 Curlew Sandpiper and 1 Common Tern control. The latter was ringed at Cape Receife, Port Elizabeth by Tony Tree in November 1971. The catching place was Abrahamskraal, Langebaan Lagoon. The NUBRA cannon only narrowly missed the main flock of 500+ birds. This was just as well since the birds tend to suffer from armpit abrasion if not taken out of the net quickly. The next effort will include a dark cloth in the equipment, to pull over the net to keep the birds quiet until they can be boxed.

C.C.H.Elliott (NUBRA)

(STOP PRESS: Records do not last long these days. The above has since been broken with the Mundy cannon, using an enlarged Ledger net. Messrs Mundy, Ledger and De Vos caught 85 birds with one firing in the Kruger Park.)

#### MARTIAL EAGLE WITH ONE EYE

On 24th March 1973 I was fortunate enough to trap an adult male Martial Eagle Polemaetus bellicosus using a balchatri trap baited with a guinea pig. The bird was trapped in the Sentrum district (about seventy kilometres north of Thabazimbi) at about midday. Our first attempt to drop the trap scared the bird off and the four members of the trapping party uttered a unanimous curse. The bird flew off about a hundred metres down the road and landed on a small bush even closer to the road than it had been before. We screamed past at about fifty kilometres an hour and dropped the balchatri again. After a long, considered look, the eagle took off and glided down on the apex of the trap, showing no defect of visual judgement. Almost as soon as it landed it started flapping wildly in the manner eagles do when noosed. We drove up with haste, to find that the bird was an adult male in good condition, but having only one functional eye. The left eye, effectively blind, was heavily clouded (a milky colour) with only a thin rim of the normal yellow colour. In the very centre was lodged the apparent cause - a thorn broken off level with the eye surface. Considering we might damage an already blind eye by attempting to remove the thorn we ringed and released the bird. After the release the bird circled low over the car several times, then flew off into the distance.



I had never before considered that an eagle in its normal bushveld habitat might be faced with such a danger - almost an occupational hazard. I have also made an observation near Johannesburg on a Spotted Eagle Owl Bubo africanus whose one orbit was completely empty - it too was in good condition (owls use their ears as well in hunting, so perhaps this is not as much of a loss as it may seem.)

It appears that in some cases at least adult birds of prey can hunt successfully with only one eye. Two questions spring to mind:

1. Would a nestling with one eye develop normal hunting habits?
2. Would an acrobatic hunter such as a falcon be able to perceive distance correctly, and hunt successfully, with one eye?

Harry Biggs (Address elsewhere)

### WALKIE-TALKIE RADIOS FOR VULTURES

One of the main reasons for the success of recent vulture-ringing expeditions to the Magaliesberg colonies was that Roberts Construction Company lent the ringing party four walkie-talkie radios. An article in the R.C.C. Bulletin (Nov.73:p.17), followed, including an appeal for reports of colour-ringed birds. This sort of publicity for ringing projects, which should be routed through the BRO and notified to NUBRA, can only benefit bird-ringing and arouse interest in a wider public.

### W.B.C. RINGING ON SHOW

As part of a drive to raise funds, the bird-ringing section of the Witwatersrand Bird Club presented an evening meeting devoted to ringing, in Johannesburg on 19th February. As a result of good advertising and an unexpected amount of interest in ringing by the public and ordinary members of the W.B.C., the venue was packed to capacity by almost 200 people. Guest speaker Peter Milstein, Chief Professional Officer with the Transvaal Nature Conservation Department, gave an excellent illustrated talk on "Ringing as a technique in bird conservation". He was followed by W.B.C. ringers Clive Hunter ("A ringing study of the Laughing Dove"), Manfred Schmitt ("Ringing of rails and crakes"), Des Hewitt ("Ringing at Melrose Bird Sanctuary") and John Ledger ("The Cape Vulture ringing project"). Guest of Honour was Royce Reed, South Africa's pioneer amateur ringer who ringed his first bird 25 years ago and is still going strong.



Royce Reed, South Africa's veteran ringer, examines one of the display boards. P.Milstein is behind him.

During the tea-break the crowd streamed into an adjacent hall where a display depicting some of the activities of W.B.C. ringers was on view. This consisted of 8 large boards bearing maps, photo's, and captions, ringing equipment, various traps, a mist net, mounted specimens and diverse literature. Ringers were on hand to answer queries and explain their work. After tea an excellent film on bird migration, made by Wim Spronk of the W.B.C., was screened, and several ringers were seen in action.

The evening was a great success, both financially and as judged by comments from visitors. The hard work that went into building the display was all worth while, and the W. B.C. is now in a position to replace old equipment used in the Club projects, build a cannon-net for capt-



Manfred Schmitt demonstrates the setting of one of his rail or tea-cup traps (see Safring News 2(2), 1973:7-9)

uring vultures at carcasses and purchase walkie-talkie radios to co-ordinate vulture ringing on cliffs and water ringing at night. We recommend this type of public appearance from time to time to other amateur ringing groups, not only for financial reasons if this might be desirable, but mainly to present bird-ringing as a scientific and responsible undertaking to the public and ordinary "bird-watchers", who are often a bit suspicious of the activities of ringers, largely because they don't know what the latter are trying to achieve.

John Ledger (B.R.O. of Witwatersrand Bird Club, P.O.Box 1038, Johannesburg, Transvaal.)

RECENT RECOVERIES

The following recoveries are listed for ringers' interest. The listing does not constitute full publication and the data may not be used by anyone but the original ringer, without permission.

R.002	Jackass Penguin <u>Spheniscus demersus</u>	P-1321 (J. Cooper)
Pull.	24.03.72 Dassen Island, W.Cape	33.26 S, 18.05 E
	20.02.74 Bird Island, Lamberts Bay, Cape	32.05 S, 18.17 E

Remarks: Killed by fish-oil pollution. This one of several score penguins, gannets and cormorants killed by fish-oil caused by malpractice at the factory at Lamberts Bay.

R.81	Sacred Ibis <u>Threskiornis aethiopicus</u>	526-1770 (W.B.C.)
Pull.	20.12.52 Modder East Dam, Benoni, Tvl.	26.11 S, 28.26 E
	26.01.74 Roberts Bird Sanctuary, Pta.	25.46 S, 28.14 E

Remarks: Flew into a fence, sexed as a female. We think this bird is the oldest Pretoria Zoo-ringed bird yet recorded in South Africa, at 21 years 1 month old.

R.91	Knob-billed Duck <u>Sarkidiornis melanotos</u>	657-0354 (T.Tree)
Ad.Male	22.03.73 Ballantyne Park, Salisbury, Rhod.	17.46 S, 31.06 E
Presumed shot	28.04.73 Between Palmira and Xinavane, Mocambique.	25.07 S, 32.49 E

R.102	Red-eyed Pochard <u>Netta erythroptalma</u>	7-25341 (T.P.A.)
Ad.Male	17.07.72 Barberspan, W.Transvaal	26.33 S, 25.36 E
Injured/died.	20.09.73 Seke Township, 18km south of Salisbury, Rhodesia.	18.02 S, 31.09 E

R.107 White-backed Vulture Gyps africanus 658-00419 (P.Mundy)  
 3 Years + 22.04.73 Sengwa, Rhodesia 18.08 S, 28.12 E  
 13.10.73 24km S. Tshaneni, Swaziland 26.13 S, 31.52 E

R.311 Rock Pigeon Columba guinea 6-37151 (J.Cooper)  
 Adult 21.10.73 U.C.T. campus, Rondebosch, Cape 33.57 S, 18.28 E  
 Caught/ 03.11.73 Philadelphia, Cape. 33.44 S, 18.37 E  
 released

R.493 European Swallow Hirundo rustica A-83641 (P.Mendelsohn)  
 19.04.70 Skinnerspruit, Pretoria, Tvl. 25.44 S, 28.10 E  
 ca 20.05.70 Lammi, Häme, Finland. 61.03 N, 25.05 E

R799 Cape Weaver Ploceus capensis 2-51402 (W.Lawson)  
 Ad.Male 22.09.72 Durban North, Natal 29.47 S, 31.02 E  
 Shot 02.03.73 Rooiklip Farm, Kokstad, Cape. 30.31 S, 29.19 E

R.808 Red Bishop Euplectes orix 2-16128 (T.P.A.)  
 Adult 23.08.71 Barberspan, W.Transvaal 26.33 S, 25.36 E  
 Shot 11.12.73 Kameelbult Farm, Vryburg Dist. 26.36 S, 25.03 E  
 Cape.

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