

FOREIGN NEWS

RAPTOR MOVEMENTS

This paper describes the relation between the number of prey species eaten by raptors and the degree to which they move, as shown by ringing recoveries. Those which feed on few species available in open country, tend to have local fluctuations in numbers which are synchronous with fluctuations in the numbers of their prey. Ringing recoveries show that these species tend to carry out 'searching migrations' which enable them to find adequate food supplies often a long way from the breeding area. Other raptors exploit a wide range of prey species and tend to be sedentary. (Ref: Galushin, V.M. (1974) Ibis 116(2):127-134)

WADER MIGRATIONS

Using radar tracking techniques on the coast of Ghana in spring (April to June), the author made the following observations:- (a) 29% of the wader flocks left in the hour before sunset and 49% in the hour after sunset i.e. most of the wader migration was nocturnal; (b) Final ground speeds varied between 55 and 92 km/h but most lay in the range 65-84 km/h; (c) Almost all the departures were in a NE direction i.e. all were directly across the Sahara towards the known breeding grounds, not necessarily across the narrowest part of the Sahara, nor along the coast.

This is a useful paper on which to base speculations on the speed, direction and duration of wader migration in southern Africa. (Ref: Grimes, L.G. (1974) Ibis 16(2): 165-171)

GULLS LOST

Continuing the work on the homing abilities of birds, gulls were transported varying distances from their nesting colony. Those released in rain near home or in haze or fog 350km from home just 'sat on the water for more than four hours'. Gulls released in fog within 50km of home appeared to fly a search pattern made up of more or less straight components 3-10km long, until they reached the edge of the fog bank or some familiar landmark. One wonders how they knew how far they were from home! (Ref: Williams, T.C. & J.M., Teal, J.M. and Kanwisher, J.W. (1974) Bird Band 45:106-114)

SACRED IBIS FLIGHT SPEED

Observations at Lake Shala, Ethiopia gave a flight speed of 38.4 km/h over a measured mile. (Ref: Urban, E.K. (1974) Auk 91:423)

FAMILIARITY BREEDS HIGHER MORTALITY

An analysis of the recoveries of 235 nestling Coopers Hawks Accipiter cooperii show that those birds which have come into close contact with man have a higher chance of being recovered in their first year than those that do not. Eight out of 33 'familiar' birds were recovered (24%) and only two out of 202 (1%) of the 'unfamiliar' birds. Familiar birds were those that were either handled frequently for growth/weight studies or were observed from hides or both. Unfamiliar birds were usually at nests visited at

the most, three times including the banding day. The paper stresses the possible dangers involved in studies where birds may become tame. The authors suggest that the 'hacking-back' technique used by falconers and to repopulate areas with birds of prey may introduce tamer and therefore more vulnerable birds into the 'wild'.

DAZZLE AND SCOOP TRAPPING METHOD

Dutch ringers are having success catching water birds from a boat, using a strong light to dazzle the birds. A dark-coloured rowing boat with a light outboard engine are used to search for the birds around the Eilands polder near Groot-Schermer. The birds are blinded by a car spot-light fed by a 12v battery. They are then caught by hand or scooped up with the aid of a net. The method has proved especially successful for Coot, Moorhen, Bittern, gulls and grebes.

(Ref: v/d Geld, J. (1974) Op het Vinketou 23:26-28)
Report via G.J. Broekhuysen.

(In a recent trip to the Okavango swamps, the same method was used and its potential was clear. Catches included Pied Kingfisher, Darter, White-backed Night-heron, Slaty Egret and crocodile. Used systematically, interesting results might be obtained.- Ed.)

COLOUR RINGS ON WHITE STORKS (Ciconia ciconia)

In our work on the young White Storks from the nests in the Bredasdorp District we have been using aluminium rings and colour rings to mark them.

The colours used up till now are, white, red, and yellow. These have been placed either on the tibia or on the tarsus.

Sightings of these colour ringed birds are very important to us and we would be grateful if readers could scrutinise any White Storks they may see and report any sightings of colour-ringed birds mentioning the colour and the position of the colour ring or rings.

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