

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

In Safring 3(1):5 M.Waltner writes on the retrap of a British ringed Knot. He mentions that this would suggest that western populations (i.e. from Greenland and N.Canada) do reach our coasts. Yet Waltner goes on to mention that a note accompanying the ringing details stated that the wing and bill of this bird were unusually large compared to the rest of the catch. It was suggested that the larger Knot come from eastern populations (N.Siberia). Knot ringed in Belgium and E.Germany have also been controlled at Langebaan and it is highly probable that only birds from the eastern populations reach southern Africa, western Knot only wintering as far south probably as West Africa.

Yours sincerely,

A.J.Tree,
4 Lomagundi Rd.,
Greencroft,
Salisbury, Rhodesia.

Dear Sir,

While netting Hirundo rustica in a reed bed roost, I was surprised to catch an example of Melopsittacus undulatus, more commonly known as the Ruddy Turnstone or Shell Parrot. I resisted the temptation to ring it this time but would be grateful if you would issue me with an extralimital "Roberts Number" so that I can add it to my totals list next time.

Yours sincerely,

L.Underhill,
12 Roseberry Road,
MOWBRAY 7700
Cape.

N.B. Roberts Number issued = 000. Dr.Underhill, NUBRA's computer consultant, leaves shortly for a year's sabbatical in Australia and New Zealand. We wish him a good trip and suggest that he can ring any number of M. undulatus down under.

DR CLIVE ELLIOTT . . . AN APPRECIATION

Clive Elliott will be leaving NUBRA at the end of 1974. He has been the Unit's first Ringing Officer, and has nourished and nursed the embryo through its first three years of life. Few will dispute the fact that the formation of NUBRA has had a profound influence on the whole structure of bird-ringing in southern Africa. The pre-NUBRA days were characterised by inefficiency, loss of valuable data and a lack of direction on the part of the majority of participants in the scheme. The lack of adequate finance and facilities was slowly strangling bird-ringing, and only a rescue operation on the scale of NUBRA could improve the situation. Clive inherited a mass of problems when he took up his appointment - the majority of these have taken the full three years to sort out, and during my first visit to the Unit, in October this year, I was singularly impressed by what Clive has achieved, especially in processing the backlog of recovery data collected in 25 years of ring-

ing. He has also been in the rather unenviable position of having to execute the policies of the NUBRA Steering Committee, and some of these, like payment for rings and project registration, were initially unpopular in certain quarters, so that a fair amount of animosity was directed at the Ringing Officer. Clive has never allowed such matters to affect him, cheerfully accepting that nothing one does is right in the eyes of dedicated critics. As a representative of the Witwatersrand Bird Club, I can say that all our dealings with Clive Elliott have been cordial, constructive and objective. He has always been open to suggestions and criticism, and we have benefitted greatly by having Clive as our guest in Johannesburg on several occasions. The generally smooth running of ringing affairs as we approach 1975, the excellence of Safring News and many other matters that the average ringer never thinks about, are testimony to his interest and dedication, and if one day the South African ringing scheme is ranked with the best in the world, as we fully expect it to be, this will in no small way due to the efforts of Clive Elliott during NUBRA's difficult years.

Although he will be leaving NUBRA, we believe that his time at the Unit has only been a stepping-stone towards a career in ornithology that will give wider expression to Clive's scientific talents. We will miss his presence at NUBRA, and wish him well in all his future undertakings.

John Ledger,
Branch Ringing Organiser,
Witwatersrand Bird Club.

DR CLIVE ELLIOTT

Thanks from the Western Cape Wader Study Group

The Western Cape Wader Study Group feels that Safring, which has been nurtured and edited by Clive Elliott, is the proper place in which to express their appreciation for his contribution to ringing, now that he has resigned as Ringing Officer. Clive has played no small part in the activities of this group, not only as a member, but as Ringing Officer his co-operation, efficiency and constructive ideas have been crucial to our functioning.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank him for this co-operation, to wish him well in his future post; and we trust that the goodwill which he has fostered between professional and amateur ringers will continue.