

The advantage of conspicuous birds is that they can be colour marked. By doing this, resightings can be treated as recaptures. This frees the ringer from having to spend all his time at traps and nets, and makes more time available for observations. Once colour marking is used, birds become individually known and aspects of their lives are revealed. This changes the emphasis of ringers' activities from ringing to studying behaviour.

The territorial behaviour of South African birds is little studied. The Bokmakierie, Telephorus zeylonus, Black Korhaan, Afrotis afra, Capped Wheatear, Oenanthe pileata, and Fiscal Shrike, Lanius collaris, are examples of excellent study subjects. What areas do they frequent? Is there any seasonal variation? How do they recognise their neighbours? And, in the case of Fiscal Shrikes, what use do they make of their larders?

The above questions are a long way from pure population dynamics but they indicate directions which can be taken by ringers. It is a matter of first asking questions about birds and then ringing them. The opposite of catching accessible birds and then trying to maximise that data collected while the bird is in the hand leads to massive collections of largely useless data. Most of that type of work can be done without ringing the birds, or by examining museum specimens. The case of data collection often leads to too much data being accumulated and the ensuing dilemma of how to process it all.

There is scope for all ringers. Take any species, preferably the one you find most interesting, and study it. The challenge is there - it is up to you to take it.

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### RINGING PERMITS

All ringers must be in possession of a ringing permit. These are issued by the conservation agencies in each of the provinces. In the Transvaal and South West Africa ringers have to apply directly to the Nature Conservation Departments. In Natal and the Cape Province ringers make their applications through their Branch Ringing Organisers and NUBRA.

In Natal, the ringers make an application for a ringing permit at the same time as they submit a project proposal. In other words all ringers must formulate ringing projects before they can obtain a permit to ring. This will be another step towards more productive ringing.

The permits will be issued to one applicant and will cover all persons assisting him. The permit will be valid for the duration of the project. The permit application/project registration forms are available from NUBRA or the Natal Branch Ringing Organiser, Philippe La Hausse. All ringers in Natal should work in co-operation with the Branch Ringing Organiser, who will give advice about the intended project.