

## FOREIGN NEWS

### FREEZE BRANDING IS NOT A SUITABLE BIRD MARKING TECHNIQUE

The result of tests conducted into the value of freeze branding birds showed that it had little value as a permanent marking technique for waterfowl (Greenwood R.J. 1975, An attempt to freeze-brand Mallard ducklings. Bird Banding 46:204-26).

### AVIAN LONGEVITY

The longest lived bird, based upon ringing, is now known to be a Royal Albatross, Diomedea epomorpha. The bird was ringed as an adult in 1958 and was found at the same colony 37 year later in 1974. As this species does not begin breeding until nine years old, the individual must have been at least 46 years old (taken from British Birds 65:252-253).

Many sea birds are known to be long lived. A group of eleven Fulmar were ringed on Eynhallow, Orkney, 1950. In 1974, 25 years later seven of them were still alive (taken from a talk on the Fulmar by Dr. G.M. Dunnet of Aberdeen University to the P.F.I.A.O. at U.C.T. in November 1975).

### CAPTURING EAGLES BY HELICOPTER

Four perched Golden Eagles, Aquila chrysaetos, were captured in Montana by forcing them to land and crouch (Ellis D.H. 1975, First experiments with capturing Golden Eagles by helicopter. Bird Banding 46:217-219).

First you need a helicopter, then you have to avoid high winds and then find eagles in suitable open flat country - maybe not a solution to capturing Black Eagles in the Matopos hills after all.

### DIFFERENT RING METALS

A study of differential loss of rings made of aluminium, titanium, and incoloy showed little differences between the three types. The birds ringed were gulls (Kadlec J.A. 1975, Recovery rates and loss of aluminium, titanium and incoloy bands on Herring Gulls. Bird Banding 46:230-235). The study was done over six years. However at the end of that period the aluminium rings had begun to deteriorate after seven years. Thus aluminium rings should still only be used on relatively short lived birds.

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The feature article in the last SAFRING Editorial: "What results from bird ringing?", should have been followed by this letter which replies to the article. We are grateful to the editor of British Birds for permission to publish and apologise for not having included it with the first article.

There is still plenty to be aired about the value of ringing and minimal information so far obtained therefrom. There was no response to the article by local ringers. It is essential that every ringer examine the reasons why he rings birds. If you were asked to justify your ringing effort how would you?

Letter:

Dear Editor,

Results from bird-ringing. The editorial in your February issue (British Birds, 69: 53-56) criticised ringers for being more interested in ringing birds than in analysing the results they obtain, and supported this allegation by reference to the list of publications which appears in each annual "Report on bird-ringing". In so doing, it overlooked the fact that much of the output of reports and analyses from the amateur ringers appears in ringing group, local and county reports and that, perhaps wrongly, these are not always included in the list which was quoted. Some of these papers would probably be judged local or interim in character, but the Ringing and Migration Committee is convinced of their value.

The position is not static. Ringers, who contribute about £15,000 a year towards the cost of running the Ringing Scheme and finance the publication of the annual report, have recently voted to support and pay for a new journal. This will publish the results of their work on a national scale, together with analyses by both amateurs and professionals, the latter having the required time, skill and experience to make the best use of the data.

We welcome the editors' plea that future contracts from the Nature Conservancy Council should include support for analysis as well as for administration, and believe that it would be a mistake to curtail ringing just as the analysis of data is beginning to gain momentum.

Dr. A.B. Watson,  
Chairman of the Ringing and  
Migration Committee,  
British Trust for Ornithology.