

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.E. Watson,  
Chairman of the Ringing and  
Migration Committee,  
British Trust for Ornithology.