breast.

We appeal to all bird-watchers to look out for these birds. If you do see a marked bird, which should be especially obvious in flight, please contact one of the following: Ron Summers or John Cooper of the PFIAO or Stephen Pringle of the Physics Department, U.C.T., or NUBRA. Please give as many details as possible including the colour of the dye and its position on the birds.

POTENTIAL DIFFICULTY WHEN RINGING TERNS

C.J. Vernon,
National Bird Ringing Unit,
University of Cape Town,
Rondebosch,
7700.

In 1971 and 1972 over 2 500 terns were ringed in the Cape Province. Amongst these were a group of 953 birds ringed in a three day period. Of these birds 41 were found dead or dying within two days of ringing. As no dead unringed birds were found, the birds obviously died as a result of being ringed. The total number of birds dying may have been higher.

The person who found these terns considered that the ringer was responsible for their death. The ringer, Tony Tree was satisfied that all the terns were perfectly capable of flight when released. However, some birds flew out and alighted on the water where they quickly became water-logged and were washed to shore. He suggests that this "is a physiological problem and only affects sea terns. Sea terns are used to windy, cool or cold conditions and almost certainly cannot stand temperatures over a certain level when unable to use normal cooling mechanisms. And this comes about when terns are in cotton bags which normally suffice for Charadriiformes. Future ringers, to offset this, should use wire mesh cages through which the wind can blow constantly and hence maintain temperature level".

Have any readers any similar experience with terns? There is obviously a need to identify the climatic conditions under which it is unfavourable to ring terns. Clear guidelines need to be provided to prevent future occurrences of a similar nature.
