

4. Colony Observation Form (used with former)
5. Standard Details Form (for free-flying birds)
6. Nest Record Form (tree-nesting species)
7. Resighted Bird Form (details of individual with resighting record)
8. Carcass Observation Form
9. Pylon Survey Form

Copies of the V.S.G. forms have been lodged with N.U.B.R.A.

In collaboration with the Witwatersrand Bird Club, the V.S.G. has arranged for the manufacture of Darvic vulture rings in two sizes, 25 mm and 16 mm. These are sold by the W.B.C. in sealed packs of 50 rings of one colour at R 3,00 per pack. Colours are red, white, blue, green, yellow and black. Previously the best closing device for these rings was a steel rivet, which did have the disadvantage that it was subject to corrosion. This has now been solved by the W.B.C., and special brass rivets have been made in England for use with the Darvic rings. These are available from the W.B.C. at R 5,00 per thousand, and all users of Darvic rings are advised that these brass rivets should be used in the interests of long life on the bird.

Persons who would like to know more about the Vulture Study Group should contact the convenor, John Ledger, at P.O. Box 1038, Johannesburg, 2000. With the large numbers of colour-ringed birds now moving about the subcontinent, we are very keen to have some assistance from people who could establish carcass-watching or pylon-survey subprojects in their areas.

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#### BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE RESEARCH IN THE TRANSVAAL

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In 1974, a B.S.K. group was started in the Transvaal, as a sub-group of the Transvaal Raptor Group. The group includes many ringers. There are members in most areas of the subcontinent, but almost all work to date has been done in the Transvaal. Warwick Tarboton, working virtually on his own, is busy doing intensive ecological studies on the B.S.K. in the central Transvaal bushveld. His study employs patagial tagging. Observations are being made on the breeding cycles of individual birds, their prey and hunting activity, and their diurnal activity patterns. The prey species of rodents are being monitored. This work will probably prove to be the most significant contribution to B.S.K. research yet.

Recently Alan Kemp has started a similar study in a grassland and agricultural environment near Bronkhorstspuit. Much of this study is comparable to that of Tarboton, and some stress is also being laid on the productivity of different raptors, and on the possible morphologic background to selection in this (and

other) environments. Both of these studies have a roost in the area, but at the Bronkhorstspuit study there was a sudden disappearance of all the birds at the roost. The B.S.K. roosts appear to serve at least as communication centres.

Apart from this ecological research, there has also been an increase in the number of birds ringed per annum (200 - 300 per year now); and a considerable amount of data available from the bird in the hand has been analysed by J. Mendelsohn and others - this is to be published soon. The current return on the ringing effort is  $\pm 3\%$ . Many road counts were also done on all raptors. These have proved of little value in assessing population densities, but have proved of real value in assessing distribution of raptors in the Transvaal in the recent Transvaal Bird Atlas Project.

At the most recent meeting of the group, there was a fairly clear ideological split between "ecologists" and "ringers". The ecologists feel the ringing effort is a high-cost-low-return activity, and that the ringers should give up the impossible task of monitoring B.S.K. movements and confine their activities to limited area marking studies. The ringers, on the other hand, point out that only by continual ringing of the B.S.K. has it been shown that the species is capable of considerable movement (500 - 1 000 km), and that only by keeping this up, will any movement pattern finally emerge.

In an attempt to unite these two fields of activity, it was suggested that the Springbok Flats be divided into grids, and that ringers do roost censuses, and colour mark birds on a regional basis. There were various practical motivational problems, and after the recent Ringing Conference, Alan Kemp suggested that the B.S.K. group as such be dissolved, and that the Transvaal Raptor Group define a new project on all raptors. This project will at once replace and partially include the B.S.K. project. This reorganisation would then fairly accurately reflect the situation that most of the really productive B.S.K. work being done in the Transvaal (now that the bird-in-the-hand data has been analysed) is that being done by Tarboton and Kemp. The new general raptor project proposed will involve analysis of a detailed set of specialised measurements to be taken by trappers, and the detailed photography of each individual - this proposal is to be discussed by the T.R.G. soon.

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#### WESTERN CAPE WADER STUDY GROUP

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The W.C.W.S.G. was founded in 1971 to co-ordinate the activities of people interested in studying waders in the Western Cape. The main objectives have changed little since they were first proposed by Geoff Wilson (Saffring 1972). These were: