

NOTES ON THE RINGED PLOVER CHARADRIUS HIATICULA IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

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Few Ringed Plover are handled in southern Africa, mainly due to the fact that this species is rarely found in concentrations sufficient to attract the attentions of ringers. Further, in both localities this species is relatively sparse. The Ringed Plover is most plentiful at favoured sites along the Natal coast and to about Knysna on the Cape coast.

Small numbers occur inland, mainly on southward passage, but normally only at favoured localities such as Lake Mcllwaine, near Salisbury. My data have been collected either at the aforementioned locality or in the eastern Cape Province between Port Alfred and Port Elizabeth.

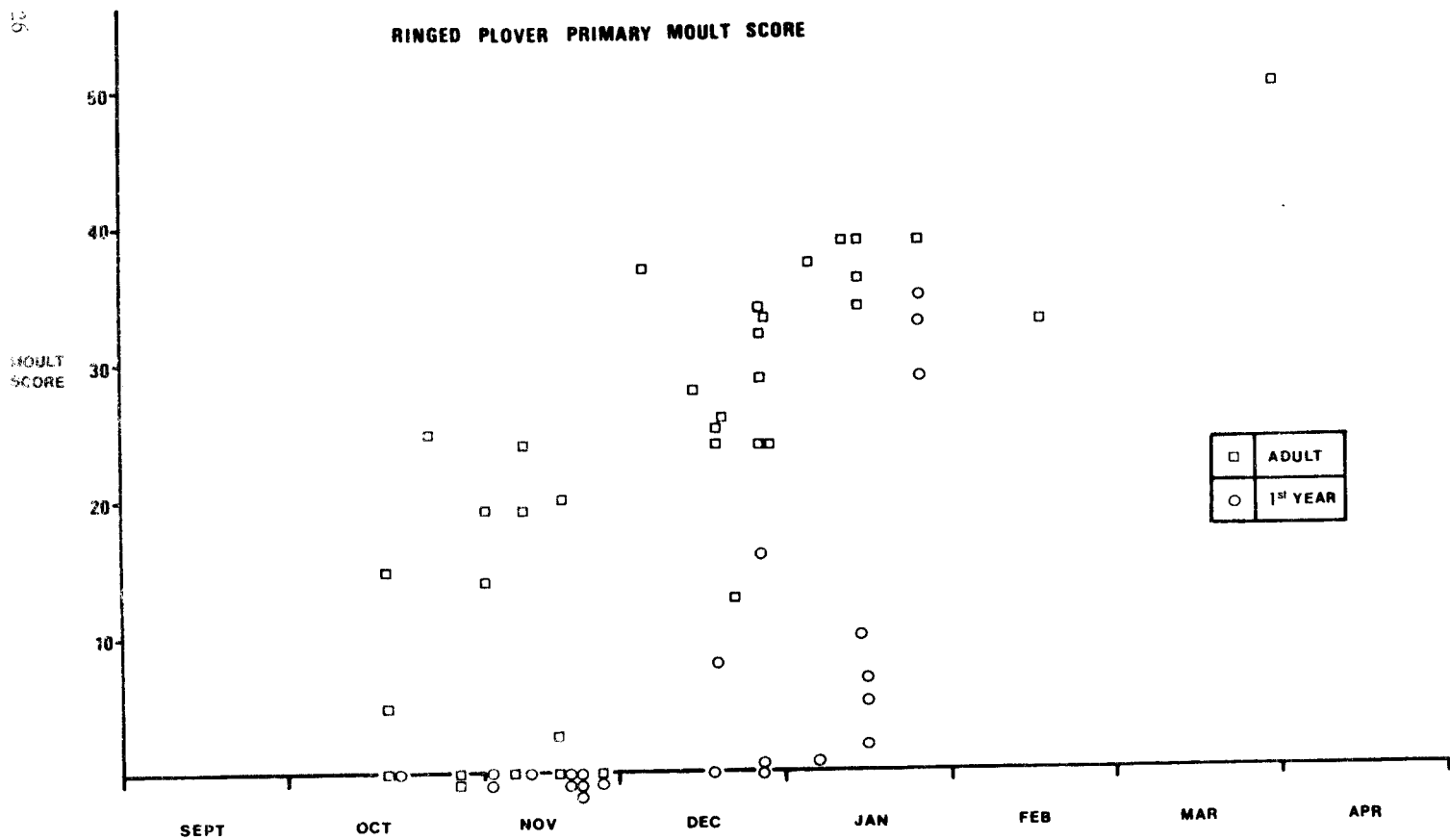
The first migrants arrive in early September and birds are still moving through in December. Return migration takes place mainly from late March to early May. Overwintering is rare, to date I have only one record, from near Port Alfred.

Winter ortstreue has only been noted in two birds to date, ringed near Port Alfred in January 1975 and recaptured at the same site in December 1976. These birds were tentatively aged as second year at the time of ringing.

Ageing:

This is relatively easy in first year birds and may be possible in second year birds but more recaptures in subsequent seasons are needed to confirm information gathered to date. A bird that overwintered in 1966 near Port Alfred showed no trace of assumption of adult plumage during its stay from May to August.

RINGED PLOVER PRIMARY MOULT SCORE



□	ADULT
○	1 st YEAR

Apparently adult birds visiting our area assume non-breeding dress contrary to what is stated in "The Handbook of British Birds" (Witherby et al.) for adult males of the nominate form and to which no opposing view is given for the form tundrae which visits us. It is possible, however, from one piece of slim evidence, that adult birds may winter further north as they get older. An unaged and unsexed bird ringed at Rondevlei near Cape Town in January 1962 was shot at the mouth of the Rhône, in France, in January 1969. The ring was returned and the record confirmed by the staff of the Tour de Valat ringing station in the Camargue who handled the recovery.

1st year:

Easily identified, even well into moult, by the pale edging to the lesser wing coverts. The inner lesser coverts are the last to be moulted. There is no contrast between the colour of the lores and crown nor is there the faintest trace of dark band on the frons.

2nd year:

Still to be adequately proven but it is thought best to put down my ideas. There is a slight contrast between the now slightly darker lores and the crown. There is a faint sign of darkening of the frons bar but no black feathers.

Adult: (Non-breeding dress)

The lores are considerably darker than the crown while the frons bar is conspicuously darker with varying amount of black feathers. A slightly greater amount of yellow is noticeable at the base of the bill.

Mensural data: (All measurements in mm. and mass in grams).

		<u>Range</u>	\bar{x}	<u>n</u>	<u>S.D.</u>	<u>Handbook</u>
Wing (max-chord)	1y	121-131	126,0	24	2,65	122-132
	Ad	121-131	127,1	28	2,65	
Bill (to feathers)		12-16	13,7	38	0,89	13-15
Tarsus		25-29	26,9	37	1,07	24-27
Tail		51-65	57,0	37	3,12	55-61

All but one bird have been handled between October and January to date but mass is dealt with by months in the hope that additional data can be added at a later date.

<u>Month</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Mass range</u>	\bar{x}	<u>S.D.</u>
October	6	48,7-58,3	52,3	3,79
November	20	45,1-63,7	52,0	5,17
December	22	46,0-57,0	52,0	3,53
January	14	43,6-52,5	49,0	2,90
March	1	56,5		

Birds migrating through Rhodesia rarely carry much extra fat. The heaviest bird (63,7g) was ringed on 6 November but on recapture on 20 November only had a mass of 49,7g. Many waders lose their fat deposits very rapidly on arrival in Rhodesia.

Moult: (Diagram 1)

Some adult birds probably start moult of the remiges in Europe and continue whilst migrating south. No birds have yet been captured in arrested moult. The moult period appears to be spread over a considerable portion of the year with early moulters starting in August and others not until the beginning of December. With the limited information available to date moult appears to be a leisurely process. The earliest birds probably complete primary moult by mid-January while late starters probably do not complete until late March or early

April. Therefore, it is possible that individual moult may take as long as five months (plus) which is much slower than similar sized palaeartic sandpipers and local plovers such as the Trable banded Ch. tricolorianis and Kittlitz Ch. pecurius.

First year birds have a complete moult which is more rapid than that of the adults. This is a very similar case to that of the Little Stint Calidris minuta. The first birds start moulting as early as November whilst others do not start until January. The complete moult may only take 3 to 3½ months.

Conclusion:

The above information is presented in the hope that coastal workers may be able to add considerably to the limited data offered here. This plover is under considerable study in the North Atlantic and is worthy of much further consideration in the south of its range.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Thick-billed Weavers

Would anyone who catches a ringed Thick-billed Weaver Amylaspiza albifrons (R. 504), besides reporting it to the Pretoria Zoo and/or SAFRING as normal, please send the information to:-

Dr Handley T. Laycock,
Hargeisa,
39 Armstrong Drive,
Wembley,
Pietermaritzburg,
3201.
