

SOME RINGING RESULTS FROM DICHWE FOREST

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In December 1975, Jeremy Talbot suggested to a group of Rhodesian ornithologists that they undertake a survey of Dichwe Forest, a patch of relict swamp forest lying about 50 km north of Sinoia. Since then eight visits have been made to the forest at various times of the year and an account of the first year's observations, including ringing notes, appeared in Honeyguide Nos. 88 and 89 (Talbot, 1976).

The use of mist nets at Dichwe has been amply justified by the list of species which would have been missed without them such as the African Broadbill, Natal Robin and Thrush Nightingale. Between December 1975 and October 1977, 264 birds were ringed, 70 recaptured and 6 recovered. Naturally, any conclusions derived from such a small sample are tentative and subject to modification. Some previous conclusions have already been upset. Probably a further three years work (terrorist activity permitting) will be necessary before any firm conclusions can be made, but results so far are not without interest.

The vegetation of Dichwe was described in detail in Talbot's article. There are two main tracts of forest separated by marshy areas and reedbeds. The larger south-eastern tract has three zones and is flanked by an area of thick woodland. Most ringing has taken place in the second of these zones where the dominant tree is Celtis africana, and the three commonest bird species are the Red-throated Twinspot, Grey-backed Bush-Warbler and Terrestrial Bulbul.

In Talbot's article, I estimated the population of Twinspots in this second zone from ringing and recapture data to be 50 pairs in November 1976. I commented at the time on the pre-dominance of males in the sample and suggested that this might

have been due to females incubating eggs. Talbot disagreed, pointing out that the Twinspot's breeding season is much later in the summer- January to April, or even May.

Twinspots were far less common in October 1977. More likely what happens is that they move out from the forest during the dry season when the undergrowth becomes sparse. In that case, the males in November would have been new arrivals establishing territories. Recapture data for the Grey-backed Bush-Warbler are still inadequate for estimating the population.

On the basis of June 1977 figures, when 14 were captured, four of which had been previously ringed, the population of Terrestrial Bulbuls may provisionally be put at 28 pairs. Ringing elsewhere has shown this to be a highly sedentary species so that there is little likelihood of its moving out as the Twinspot presumably does. It is most unusual to recapture a Terrestrial Bulbul away from the patch of bush where it was first ringed in spite of a recapture rate of something like 40%.

It is unwise to jump to conclusions on the basis of a single bird ringed and later recaptured but this has happened with two Bichwe species, the Blue-grey Flycatcher and Natal Robin. A Blue-grey Flycatcher was recaptured in March 1976 in a clearing in the forest; it (presumably the same bird) was netted and ringed in August of that year and seen with the ring on in November 1976 and January 1977. Finally, it was recaptured in June 1977. No other Blue-grey Flycatcher has been seen for certain, only one bird having been seen at a time. It is assumed that the clearing is the centre of this bird's territory; it may or may not have a mate.

Less than 50 metres from the clearing, a Natal Robin was netted and ringed in August 1976. In Rhodesia's Eastern Districts the Natal Robin has definite seasonal movements and this bird was thought to be moving through. It was, however, recaptured in January 1977, about 500 metres away. It had not arrived in August, going to establish a territory in the bush there.

departure in January after a failed breeding attempt in eastern Rhodesia? All one can say is that, apart from a fleeting view in November 1976 which may or may not have been the same bird, this is the only Natal Robin so far recorded at Dichwe.

One is perhaps on firmer ground in postulating seasonal movements in Heuglin's Robin. It is highly territorial and a "sucker" for getting netted. Up to June 1977 we ringed 11 with only two recaptures. In October we ringed a further 7 with no recaptures. Is this another case of new arrivals trying to set up territories?

And so the Pigmy Kingfisher. Near the Rhodesian watershed we have ringed Pigmy Kingfishers only in October/November and March/April, indicating that it is a passage migrant. This opinion was supported and applied to Dichwe which is far from the watershed when four were ringed in March 1976 and a further two in November. It was completely upset in January 1977. Of four birds then captured, one had been ringed the previous March and another was a juvenile recently out of the nest which must have been hatched locally. To complicate matters further, another juvenile was taken in June when it ought, by all accounts, to have been wintering in Zaire. This bird, unfortunately, died when being kept overnight and is now in the Queen Victoria Museum, Salisbury.

Much has come from Dichwe so far. We only hope that the terrorist war will not prevent us from following up our observations.

References

- Talbot, J.N. On the Dichwe Lemon Forest and its Avifauna. Honeyguide No. 88 pp 12-45, November 1976 and No. 89 pp 11-35, February 1977.

LIST OF BIRDS RINGED AND RETRAPPED AT DICHWE
DECEMBER 1975 - OCTOBER 1977

	Ringed	Retrapped
Tambourine Dove <u>Turtur tympanistria</u>	4	1
Natal (Pigmy) Kingfisher <u>Ispidina picta</u>	12	1
Brown-hooded Kingfisher <u>Halcyon albiventris</u>	4	1
Yellow-fronted Tinker Barbet <u>Buccanodon whitei</u>	2	1
Black-eyed Bulbul <u>Pycnonotus barbatus</u>	12	1
Terrestrial Bulbul <u>Phyllastrephus terrestris</u>	32	15
Yellow-bellied Bulbul <u>Chlorocichla flaviventris</u>	7	1
Natal Robin <u>Cossypha natalensis</u>	1	1
Heuglin's Robin <u>Cossypha heuglini</u>	16	2
Eastern Bearded Robin <u>Erythropygia quadrivirgata</u>	9	3
Grey-backed Bush Warbler <u>Camaroptera brevicaudata</u>	33	7
Lazy Cisticola <u>Cisticola aberrans</u>	2	1
Blue-Grey Flycatcher <u>Muscicapa cinerea</u>	1	1
Red-throated Twinspot <u>Hypargos niveoguttatus</u>	47	33