

## BIRD RINGING IN RHODESIA

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Although ringing has been carried out in Rhodesia since the 1950's it was only in the 1960's, under the auspices of Des Jackson, that some meaning was brought into ringing studies. In these years particular attention was paid to ducks, waders, nightjars and Carmine Bee-eaters. Since then the trends have varied from one group of birds to another as students study a certain species or group for degree purposes or specialist amateurs concentrate on various species as the fancy or opportunity takes them. Thus ringing reports over a period of years show periodic upswings in the ringing of different groups of birds whether they be vultures, ducks, waders, doves, palaeartic warblers, swallows, queleas, weavers or widow-birds. Unfortunately until quite recently there has been too much unconstructive ringing in which people would ring anything that turned up in their nets, or visit a site only once or twice, or only go ringing when they had nothing else to do on a Saturday afternoon. This has ceased to a great extent and now the few remaining ringers are concentrating on species groups and regular site netting. Ringing in Rhodesia has, however, been badly hit by petrol rationing, terrorist activities and, more recently, a rapidly declining membership as people leave the country.

Today virtually all ringing activities are carried out in the Salisbury area with particular emphasis on waders, swallows, palaeartic and indigenous reed haunting warblers and quelea. Here we have five active ringers but even so there is a decline in ringing activity with only waders and warblers receiving constant attention at present.

As in any ringing scheme ducks have shown the highest percentage recovery rate and over the years considerable numbers of Red-billed Teal, White-faced and Knob-billed Ducks have been ringed. The majority of recoveries have been from within the territory. Red-billed Teal recoveries have shown that our population appears to be nomadic or partially migratory within a region contained between the lines of latitude 15°S and 27°S; whilst the White-faced Duck merely appears to move between Rhodesia and southern Zambia. Of particular interest have been the results obtained from ringing Knob-billed Duck. The majority of recoveries have indicated movements from the ringing stations either between south and south-east or between north-west and north-east. Those moving south have all been to southern Mocambique/Swaziland while those to the north have been found in Zaire, Zambia, Tanzania, Tchad (2) and Sudan (3).

Although over 8 000 waders have been ringed in the last eight years the recoveries have been poor but much else has been learnt about this interesting family, particularly with the small plovers. Most recoveries have been in South Africa with a Curlew Sandpiper to the Western Cape and three Little Stints, a Ruff and two Wood Sandpipers to the Transvaal. One Little Stint was controlled in Kenya whilst another from there was recently captured here. One Ruff and four Common Sandpipers were subsequently recovered in Russia.

Ringing of European Swallows has never been on a large scale in Rhodesia as in South Africa yet from recoveries and controls we find that our source of birds is from Britain across to about 40°E in Russia, but mainly from eastern Europe. Quite a few birds from the south-western Cape and Transvaal have also been found here. Concerted efforts at some of the enormous roosts here would probably prove to be of considerable interest.

I have only picked on some of the more glamorous migrant recoveries to indicate what has been achieved here but many more sedentary or less recoverable species have been ringed in considerable numbers with many local recoveries and controls adding much to what is known about our birds.

Finally, mention must be made of some of the intensive studies that have been or are still being made in Rhodesia. Val Gargett's work on the Black Eagle and Pete Mundy's work on vultures are well known to all but less well known is the sterling work being done on the Augur Buzzard by Adrian Lendrum, or forest species of the Eastern District mountains by Alec Manson. My own work on waders has been going on for eight years now but much still needs to be discovered.

All in all, although our numbers are very small we have achieved a reasonable degree of success over the years and will, hopefully, continue to do so in the future.



Peter Mundy's study of vultures in Rhodesia has been highly successful as a result of using a cannon-net to capture free-flying birds. Here he is placing an electric detonator into one of the cannons, which he designed and developed himself.