

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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In your editorial in the latest Safring news you state "A major turning point came in 1976 when, at the first Bird Ringing Conference, SAFRING announced that its policy henceforward was to support project orientated ringing only - no more "ring and fling". With hindsight it is clear that this policy was made rather too abruptly and in the process a number of ringers were alienated". Hindsight is not necessary - I pointed out the obvious consequences at the time. However, the main purpose of this letter is to query the implication, repeated in John Bunning's article, that ringing which is not project orientated is of necessity "ring and fling".

An examination of the history of bird ringing will show that a vast amount of published data has resulted from ringing which was not originally based on any specific project. Birds have been trapped by various methods, weighed, measured, ringed and released, and in due course data worthy of publication were found to have been accumulated. Even "ring and fling" techniques are acceptable when their use permits the large scale ringing which results in the establishment of migration patterns.

Registration of a project, is of course, no guarantee that it will ever be published. The large number of projects which have apparently never progressed beyond the act of

registration has no doubt not escaped your notice.

My main objection to the "projects only" system, stated at the First (and last to date) Bird Ringing Conference, is the fact that the inevitable reduction in bird ringing results in a reduction of the number of trainees - and trainers. How many active ringers are there in this country capable of showing a beginner how to trap and handle a Chanting Goshawk or Spotted Eagle Owl?

By all means, limit the number of rings issued if SAFRING is not capable of handling the accumulated data, but why discourage the activities of competent operators who are paying their own sometimes considerable expenses and at the same time adding even slightly to the accumulated knowledge? After all, even I have had something published, and I am not likely to ever register a project.

#### CONGRATULATIONS

I am sure that all ringers will join us in congratulating Marie Therese and Clive Elliott (the first full-time Ringing Organiser) on the birth of their second son - Nicolas Johann Clive Elliott at 11.40 a.m. on the 8th February 1980 in Luzern, Switzerland. The Elliotts are now in Arusha, Tanzania where Clive is working on Quelea for the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations.