

NOTES & NEWS

NEWS FROM SAFRING

P.D. Morant

Activities in 1979

Traditionally the report for each ringing year is published in Ostrich. However many of SAFRING's activities are only mentioned in the Annual Report to the Steering Committee. The Committee felt that much of the information in the Annual Report, while not suitable for publication in a formal scientific paper, would be of interest to ringers.

During 1979 a major task undertaken by SAFRING was the extraction of all the bird body mass data in the files. The aim of this project is to provide baseline information for ornithologists. Where possible the data are being analysed on a sexual, spatial and temporal basis so that seasonal and regional variations may be identified. For those species for which little existing data are available, the existing data will be combined to give a simple mean figure. A paper "Patterns of variation in body-mass in the Black-eyed Bulbul" (Pycnonotus barbatus) utilizing some of the mass data has been accepted for publication in Ibis. The paper is a combined effort by Dr. Tim Crowe (Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology), Mr Tony Robelo (a third year zoology student at the University of Cape Town) and Messrs W.J. Lawson and A.J. Manson (well-known southern African bird-ringers).

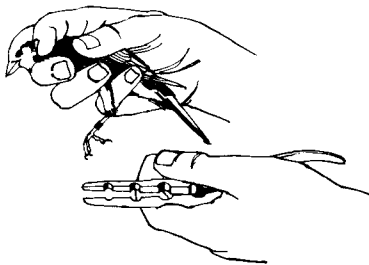
A review of seabird ringing in southern Africa during the period 1948 - 1978 was published in the Cormorant No. 6, 1979. The paper included longevity records for southern African ringed seabirds. This paper has led to another, being produced in conjunction with Messrs R.K. Brooke and R. Abrams of the PFIPO, collating all the records of recoveries in southern Africa of extralimittally breeding seabirds. At the request of the Subcommittee on Bird Biology, of the Scientific Committee for Antarctic Research, SAFRING compiled a report "Bird Banding in the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic: A Summary". The report, which summarized the banding activities of eight nations operating in the Antarctic and environs since World War II, was presented to

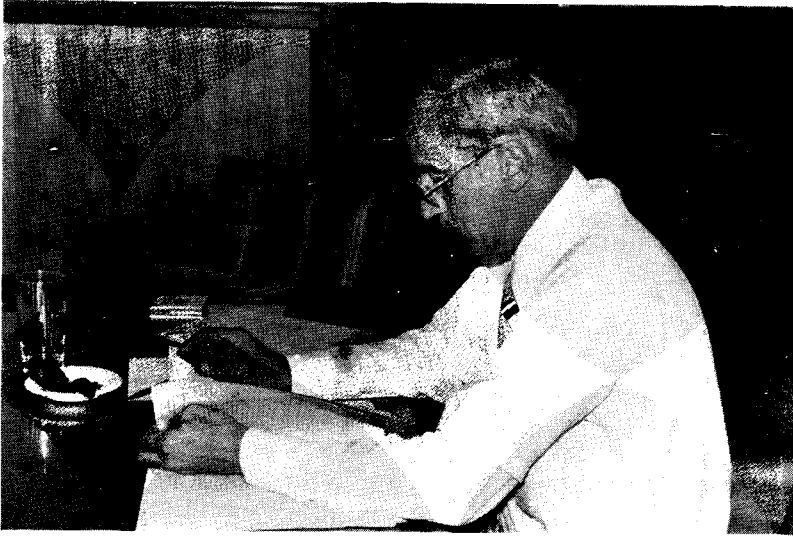
the meeting of the Sub-committee held in Pretoria from 6 - 11 August 1979. Subsequently the report has been condensed and submitted for publication in the South African Journal for Antarctic Research.

A paper, produced in conjunction with Mr John Cooper (PFIAO) and Mr Rod Randall (University of Port Elizabeth), "The success of attempts to rehabilitate oiled Jackass Penguins" was presented to the Symposium on Birds of the Sea and Shore held at the University of Cape Town in November 1979. The paper reviews the efforts of the South African National Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds (SANCCOB) to clean and return to the environment Jackass Penguins Spheniscus demersus which have been victims of oil pollution.

SAFRING has provided distributional data to the South African national Red Data Book: Aves project and to the Cape Department of Nature and Environmental Conservation's survey of the status of raptors in the Cape Province.

A bilingual (English/Afrikaans) publicity pamphlet was designed and printed during the year. Supplies of the pamphlet have been sent to all the active bird clubs. Copies of the pamphlet are enclosed with every recovery report sent to the finder of a ringed bird. Besides being more attractive and informative than the old pamphlet it is hoped that the new one will help to increase the rate of recovery of ringed birds.





Mr P.J. Le Roux, Chairman of the SAFRING Steering Committee, checks the Agenda for the annual meeting held in Pietermaritzburg on 6th November 1980.

An interesting recovery

An Arabic letter was received from Saudi Arabia via our colleagues in Finland. The finder, who picked up a Finnish-ringed bird beside the Steppe Buzzard, sent both reports to Finland whence it was sent to SAFRING.

What does one do when faced with a letter in Arabic? I took the problem to my colleague Richard Brooke who said "Go and see the Professor of Hebrew, of course!" I was taken aback until Richard pointed out that any Professor of Hebrew worth his salt would know Arabic as well. Jenny Carter, then SAFRING's secretary, used her charm on Professor S.A. Hopkins at the University of Cape Town who kindly translated the letter as follows:

To whom it may concern:

I came upon a falcon/hawk and on its leg was a ring on which was written the address on the envelope. I wish to send you this

السارد المسؤول

عنته وبعد .

لقد عذت على صقر وفي رجليه خاتم كتب عليه العنوان الموجود على
الطرف فأصبته آه - أبعث لكم بهذه الرسالة راجياً أن يكون فيها
شيئاً من الفائدة يومئذ إلى نتيجته معينه .
علماً أن هذا الأمر قضيت عليه يوم ١٤/١١/٩٥ هـ بالتاريخ الهجري
وقضيت عليه في شمال غرب المملكة العربية السعودية غرب المدينة المنورة
بجوالي ١٠٧ كدم .
وللعلم قضيت على صقر آخر في نفس المكان وتاريخ ١٥/١١/٩٥ هـ كتب
عليه العنوان - راجياً :

INFORM 200

PRETORIA

K 0 4032

وإذا أردتم أي معلومات أفرد أرجو اللجوء لي على العنوان المذكور أعلاه

وتقبلوا تحياتي

الرسالة

محمد محمد احمد الحارثي
المملكة العربية السعودية / المدينة المنورة / مركز الخدمة الاجتماعية / المنشية

in the hope that it will be of some benefit to you in helping you reach useful results.

This hawk was captured on 4/11/'98 according to the Islamic calendar and was caught in NW Saudi Arabia about 107 km west of Medina.

For your information another hawk was caught at the same place on 5/11/'98 and on it was written the following address:

Inform Zoo

Pretoria

KO 4032

If you wish to have further information I hope you will write to me at the address below.

With best wishes,

Muhammad Hamd Ahmad al-Hazimi

Centre for Educational and Social Services

Media, Saudi Arabia.

The full details are:

Species: (R154) Steppe Buzzard Buteo buteo

Ring No: K 04032

Ring date: 1 November 1975

Ring location: Holme Park, Transvaal 24 56 S; 28 32 E

Ringer: Frank von Maltitz

Recovery date: 7 October 1978

Recovery locality: 107 km west of Medina, Saudi Arabia

24 30 N; 38 20 E (approximate co-ordinates)

Status: Presumed dead

Finder: Muhammad Hamd al-Hazimi

Medina, Saudi Arabia.

The lighter side of SAFRING

The following letter was received from the Pretoria Zoo:

The Curator,
Pretoria Zoo,
Pretoria

16.12.79

Dear Curator,

Further to the instructions on the enclosed ring I am informing you of the circumstances surrounding the demise of your pigeon.

At 5.30 a.m. today this bird along with several others was observed feloniously destroying crops in a Bryanston garden. Between that time and 7.00 a.m. several birds were shot, this one among them.

The ring was noticed among the dead and the bird kept aside for close inspection. It was in wonderful condition, very fat, and is, at the moment, soaking in a special marinade prior to joining us for Sunday lunch.

I look forward very much to meeting some more of these magnificent birds in identical circumstances to those pertaining today.

Yours faithfully and Happy Xmas.

Pigeon Lover.

P.S. Would it be possible to have some rock pigeons next? They are equally good for the table and make a far more presentable appearance when served to guests than their smaller cousins.

However the finder did not enclose the ring and gave neither the ring number nor his name and address! The letter bore a Johannesburg postmark. We at SAFRING wish that "Pigeon Lover" would add ornithology to his obvious interest in gastronomy - it is very frustrating to hear of the demise of a ringed bird without receiving the recovery information.

P.D. MORANT, SAFRING, University of Cape Town, 7700 RONDEBOSCH.