MOBBING OF A MOUNTED SPOTTED EAGLE OWL

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A mounted, stuffed Spotted Eagle Owl Bubo africanus has often been used during ringing operations at the Melville Koppies Nature Reserve, in the hopes of improving catches. Although this has not always been successful it is interesting to note the number of species that have been observed to come to mob the owl skin. The following is a list of these species with indications of the type of reaction to the mounted bird:-

Strong reaction with lots of noise

R 545 Black eyed Bulbul, R 707 Fiscal Shrike, R 734 Indian Myna, R 737 Cape Glossy Starling, R 775 Cape White-eye and R 803 Masked Weaver.

Strong reaction with some noise

R 439 Crested Barbet, R 662 Bar-throated Apalis, R 786 Cape Sparrow and R 799 Cape Weaver.

Mild reaction

R 317 Laughing Dove, R 390 Speckled Mousebird, R 495 White-throated Swallow, R 637 Neddicky, R 650 Black-chested Prinia, R 763 White-bellied Sunbird and R 867 Streaky-headed Seed-eater.

Mousebirds, Neddicky, Prinia and Seed-eaters sometimes call. The others are usually silent.

The other species which are regularly seen in the koppies but which do not appear to take any notice of the stuffed Eagle Owl are:-
R 311 Rock Pigeon, R 392 Red-faced Mousebird, R 553 Olive Thrush, R 629 Fantail Cisticola, R 711 Crimson-breasted Shrike, R 391 White-backed Mousebird, R 431 Black-collared Barbet, R 581 Cape Robin, R 639 Wailing Cisticola and R 722 Bokmakierie.

Another interesting fact is that I have often used with great success the recorded call of the Pearl-spotted Owl to call up birds at other localities. However when this call is played at the Melville Koppies Nature Reserve it has no effect whatsoever on the resident bird population there. This is probably because the

Pearl-spotted Owl does not occur in this area and the resident birds are not familar with this species nor its call, whereas the Spotted Eagle Owl is a resident, breeding species.

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