

LETTERS

PUBLICITY FOR RINGING

Sir,

The fact that we do occasionally have a ring returned from somewhere in this large country of ours has always seemed to me completely incredible, considering the fact that ringing is given so little publicity. I venture to suggest that even members of the S.A.O.S. very seldom stop to check a swallow, owl or other bird killed on the road.

The fact that a lot of ground work was done several years ago - posters were prepared by, I think, Clive Hunter - makes the situation rather puzzling. Surely no great expense would be involved, and surely the results would more than justify the expense? I have been told that three pages are devoted to Bird Ringing in the biology books used in German schools - in this country there isn't even a poster on the notice board.

The following suggestions are not new, but some of them will bear repetition.

1. The recently prepared write-up on bird ringing is a step in the right direction. Presumably it is being sent to every biology teacher, school secretary, bird club member, and by the score to the headquarters of the Scout, Guide, Voortrekker and similarly orientated movements. Parks Boards, Nature Conservation organisations and farmers' co-operatives are no doubt receiving high priority.
2. Attractive posters should be put up in every post office in the country, and particularly in the platteland where every farmer checks the board when collecting his mail. These same posters should be sent to every school for their notice boards - the present pamphlet is far too long for this purpose.

3. An attractive card, in colour, worded to give the impression that the recipient has made no small contribution to Science (or "Flora and Fauna", which seems to enjoy some respect among the farmers I have met) should be sent to every person who sends in news of ringed birds, usually "found dead". It should be something he can hang on the wall and use as a "conversation piece", and should be accompanied by a copy of the "Bird Ringing" leaflet. Hopefully the latter is already being done.

I would be happy to contribute to such a project, as I am sure that the results would be well worth while. The present computer print-out is fine for the ringer but hardly designed to cause the average member of the public any wild excitement.

It has recently been suggested that funds could be made available for deserving projects - may I suggest that it is difficult to imagine a project more worthy of support than one designed to encourage a larger percentage return of recovery data, coupled with a greater awareness of birds among the public?

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COLOUR RINGS

This exchange between Messrs Dowsett and Bunning should alert ringers to the hazards of using celluloid colour rings in environments receiving large amounts of bright sunshine. - Ed.

Dear Mr Bunning,

I was interested to read in Safring News, 1979, 8: 26-27, of your experience with colour rings. However I'm a bit worried that your perhaps rather sweeping suggestion that popular belief is mistaken, might encourage people to ignore the undoubted limitations of colour rings. There are certainly documented cases in which some rings have faded. Here I've had populations colour-ringed only for up to 27 months, but already some cases of fading have been noted. This applies to birds of relatively open situations