

Editorial

This issue of Afring News has some exciting articles about capture methods of flamingos, ducks, nightjars and larks. It's great when ringers devise new catching techniques; sometimes these may actually be known methods that have been re-invented. There are papers on ageing (thrush) and sexing (fody). General papers are about relocating raptors, a long-term report on ringing at Bishop's Glen, and notes on swallow mortality and an exciting egret resighting. The annual ringing report is similar to previous ones but the recovery report has been revamped.

An exciting project in the future is to analyse moult data that ringers have been submitting. I have been doing this for weaverbirds and would like to do so for other species next year. The method of analysis needs primary feathers to be weighed, so ringers can help by continuing to send moult data in their schedules but also to send wings of road-kills. As the last paper explains, we hope to put together a booklet for ringers with these analyses, to be used in the field while ringing.

While the number of articles we now receive for Afring News is encouraging, the editors (Doug Harebottle, Michael Brooks and myself) find that we need to put in a large amount of time in correcting poorly written papers. While there is some flexibility in the format, please do look at recent issues and use the same formats. We will be more strict in the future, however, and send articles back to authors for improvement if they are of a poor quality. The best thing to do, after looking at Afring News issues, is to let a colleague read your article before submitting to us – make sure you acknowledge anyone who helps improve your paper.

It is very important for ringers to realize that SAFRING is the clearing house for reporting all resightings of colour-ringed birds, and recoveries of any ringed birds. This means that any document, email, article, form or anything else that you send out requesting the general public (including birders and bird clubs) to look for ringed birds, must give SAFRING's contact details. If you have volunteers or field workers that you are in regular contact with, they can send the resightings to you which you can then forward to SAFRING. A good example of how not to do it, is the most recent Africa – Birds and Birding ("The big band era?"). This article requests readers (i.e. general birders) to look for colour-ringed vultures in KwaZulu-Natal and report these to the reserve office, a website, or an as yet unknown formal structure! SAFRING is not mentioned even though SAFRING is the only formal long-term structure for reporting such records to. SAFRING has been around (in various forms) for over 55 years and will continue as the permanent scheme in southern Africa. Other organizations can change over the decades with changing perspectives and priorities. Current staff may be excited about ringing but staff can change and then if reports are still sent to these offices (or web sites or whatever) they will probably get lost.

SAFRING will soon be holding national ringing courses, some focused on themes for ringers (e.g. moult, aging and sexing), others as general training courses. The location of these courses, dates and other information will be distributed as they are finalized.

*Dieter Oschadleus
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