

Editorial

The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism has decided to stop funding SAFRING. They have been the main funders for the last 13 years or so. They have not given a reason for this change, and efforts are being made to re-instate this funding. It seems unlikely to happen, however, and SAFRING will have to raise finances from other sources.

Michael Brooks was appointed as a full-time assistant at SAFRING from February 2004. He will soon complete a user-friendly program will be available for ringers to enter their data. This program will be database orientated (rather than spreadsheet), thus reducing the error rate, and it will not require ringers to have Access. It will also allow a wide variety of interesting reports to be generated by the ringer to keep track of his or her ringing data. We are also working on a new African species list as more ringing is happening outside of southern Africa, and also to update recent name and taxonomy changes.

There is a range of papers in this issue; Stephanie Tyler wrote a comprehensive review of African Reed Warblers in Botswana. This is followed by papers on Malachite Sunbird biometrics, pipit identification, African Citril taxonomy, and Southern Greyheaded Sparrow

range expansion. The latter paper shows how ringing data can be used to note otherwise-unknown range expansions in birds – similarly one could look at historical ringing data to analyse range changes. The ringing and recovery reports for 2002/03 are included in this issue. The total of 89 689 birds ringed is the highest annual total over the last 55 years. Well done to all the ringers! Flipper banding of penguins is not relevant to most ringers, but the paper illustrates how ringers always need to consider the welfare of the birds we handle.

Sad news is the untimely death of Eugene Marais. Three obituaries were received, showing the influence that Eugene had on other ringers.

There will be a ringing course at Potberg in De Hoop Nature Reserve, held over 21–27 August 2004. This issue may arrive too late, but advertisements have been posted on various listservers. The short notice is due to space becoming available at Potberg in August while the rest of summer it is fully booked. There will also be the usual course at Wakkerstroom in the first week of January 2005.

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