

Notes on a ringing season in north-east Limpopo Province

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Introduction

Reports on ringing sites have regularly been published in (S)Afring News (e.g. Brown & Brown 2003) and besides providing exciting ringing news also contain worthwhile data. These accounts also often contain a wealth of data on numerous individual species. However, unless researchers have access to these publications, and are aware of the data they contain, they will often be overlooked. In addition to anecdotal data on a number of species, species lists, that may not be comprehensive if determined by observation only, can be compiled. These lists may include species detected out of range as in this study (Symes & Perrin 2000).

My ringing "territory" is KwaZulu-Natal, but I have ringed in some other exciting places from Zambia to Papua New Guinea. Most other ringers will agree that entering a new region and catching birds not reported from their regular sites is stimulating and rewarding. The results of this paper are those collected over a ringing season at two study sites in north-eastern Limpopo Province. Ringing was conducted during a study of the Greyheaded Parrot *Poicephalus fuscicollis suahelicus* in the region and occurred while conducting avian community studies in the region. Notes on some species are given, with comments on the time spent ringing in the region.

Materials and methods

Ringing occurred at Levubu from 03 September – 15 Dec 1999 when Greyheaded Parrots occur seasonally in the area

(Symes & Perrin 2003). Additional ringing was done on 2, 10 and 30 Oct 2000. Ringing occurred at Makuya from 19 May – 28 Jul 2000, when Greyheaded Parrots were breeding (Symes & Perrin 2004). One session occurred in Tshikondeni village on 6 Oct 2000. There were three ringing localities at this site, two of which were ringed regularly. Details of study sites are summarised in Table 1.

All ringing was done under permit of the relevant landowners and authorities (e.g. Northern Province Nature Conservation).

Results

A total of 256 individual birds were ringed. There were 13 recaptures which accounts for 5.4 % of all birds ringed at sites visited more than once. A summary of ringing sessions and results is summarised in Table 2. Four localities were regularly ringed (Table 2). Some details of individual species, moult and breeding, follow below. All species ringed are summarised by localities in Appendix 1. A species list of birds recorded over three months at each site are given in a separate publication (Symes & Perrin In prep.). These included 97, 103, 113 (20 migrant species) and 90 (14 migrants) recorded at Horseshoe, Tshikuyu, Prinsloo's and Joubert's respectively (16 x 300 m transects/month, walked in both direction for 30 min; Levubu – Oct to Dec, Makuya - May to Jul; four sessions/time periods - before 09h00, 09h01 - 12h00, 12h01 - 15h00, after 15h00; the same time period was walked only once in a day; bird species recorded visually and audibly).

Species accounts

Cape Turtle-Dove *Streptopelia capicola*

At Tshikuyu, on 07 June 2000 two adults each had moult scores of 4000000000 and 5400000000.

Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove *Turtur chalcospilos*

At Prinsloo on 24 Nov 1999 an adult had a moult score of 5555540000 and a brood patch.

Red-chested Cuckoo *Cuculus solitarius*

The individual ringed at Joubert's did not appear to be a juvenile but did not have any red on the chest. The species was very vocal in the area during the study.

Speckled Mousebird *Colius striatus*

At Prinsloo's, on 22 Oct 1999, an adult had a moult score of 555554100 whilst an immature had new primary feathers.

Giant Kingfisher *Megaceryle maximus*

This individual was caught along a stream course, a tributary of the Mutale river, and its capture was unexpected.

Lesser Honeyguide *Indicator minor*

On 19 Oct 1999, at Joubert's two adults were ringed. One was recorded with old flight feathers (32.9g) whilst the other had a primary moult score of 55555540 (28.0g).

Golden-tailed Woodpecker *Campethera abingoni*

At Prinsloo's, on 03 Sept 1999, a female was recorded with a brood patch.

Cardinal Woodpecker *Dendropicos fuscescens*

At Prinsloo's, on 06 October 1999, a male was recorded with a brood patch.

Olive Woodpecker *Dendropicos griseocephalus*

At Joubert's, on 01 October 1999, a female was recorded with a brood patch.

African Broadbill *Smithornis capensis*

On 01 Oct 1999 a female African Broadbill was ringed at Joubert's. It was captured 66 days later (6 Dec) with a prominent brood patch (see Symes & Perrin 2000).

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

On 14 December 1999, at Prinsloo's, an adult had a primary moult of 4441000000. Two other birds caught on 20 Oct and 02 Dec had old primary feathers.

Stierling's Wren-Warbler *Calamonastes stierlingi*

This species was ringed at Prinsloo's south of the Luvuvhu river whilst at Joubert's it was neither caught nor detected. It was detected at both Makuya sites but not caught. Barred Wren-Warbler was only detected at Prinsloo's but not caught.

Green-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera brachyura*

This species was detected and ringed at both Levubu sites.

Grey-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera brevicaudata*

This species was detected and ringed at both Makuya sites. An adult at Horseshoe, on 01 July 2000, had a primary moult score of 555554310.

Rattling Cisticola *Cisticola chiniana*

At Horseshoe adults caught on 24 May, 01 Jul and 13 Jul had primary moult scores of 5554300000 (one other with new primary feathers), 5555553000 (two others with new primary feathers) and 5555500000 (two others with new primary feathers) respectively.

Cape Batis *Batis capensis*

This species was only ringed and detected at Joubert's, a more mesic habitat.

Chinspot Batis *Batis molitor*

This species was only caught at Horseshoe, but also detected at Prinsloo's and Tshikuyu.

Southern Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer diffusus*

At Horseshoe the 24 Jun 2000 and adult scored 555555520 and one with new feathers, and on 29 Jun three adults scored 555555300, 5555551000, 555555540 and three other birds had new feathers.

Spectacled Weaver *Ploceus ocularis*

An adult female caught on 24 May had a primary moult score of 5555550000.

Green-winged Pytilia *Pytilia melba*

At Tshikuyu, on 29 June 2000, an adult male had primary moult score of 555555000 whilst two females had old primary feathers. On 30 June another adult male scored 555540000 whilst two females had old primaries.

Jameson's Firefinch *Lagonosticta rhodopareia*

A juvenile caught at Tshikuyu on 19 May 2000 was not recorded in moult. On 28 July it was recaptured as an adult with primary moult 5550000000. Three other adults had scores of 5554000000, 5555300000 and 5555550000. On 30 Jun an adult scored 5555200000 whilst another adult had slightly worn primaries. On 09 July, two adults scored 5555530000 and 555555000 whilst a juvenile had new primaries. On 01 July 2000 at Horseshoe three adults scored 4000000000, 5300000000 and 5555500000.

Blue Waxbill *Uraeginthus angolensis*

An adult caught at Horseshoe on 24 May 2000 had a primary moult score of 5542000000. When it was recaptured 58 days later (21 July) the moult score was 5555554000. On 24 May four other individuals had the following scores: 5555554000, 5555500000, 4200000000 and 5542000000, with two males having brood patches. On 13 July a single adult caught had a primary moult of 5555555400; and on 21 July two of four adults had primary moult scores of 5555555300 and 5555555551.

Discussion

The erection of nets for catching birds is likely to catch most species active at the level at which the net is set. This is evident in

this study where recaptures of Pycnonotidae and Turdidae were most common. There are benefits to this method, in which certain groups (or guilds) are targeted, in that species not vocal or common when censusing by traditional methods are recorded. Confirmation of identification can also be established, especially for observers unfamiliar with the avifauna of a region, or where the identification of closely related species in the field may be problematic. Such was the case of the Green-backed and Grey-backed Camaroptera. The habitat at Prinsloo's (at Levubu) was more similar to that at the two Makuya sites but supported Green-backed rather than Grey-backed Camaroptera. However, at Levubu, Joubert's site supported Cape Batis whilst Prinsloo's supported Chinspot Batis.

Large species are often excluded from nets because of fixed mesh size, but if nets are loose species as large as Crested Guinea fowl can be held in the net. However, one needs to ensure rapid removal from the net to ensure the net is not damaged.

Robin species are often involved in local migratory movements and in the Soutpansberg altitudinal movements may occur. Observations at Levubu sites, especially Joubert's suggested that Red-capped Robin-Chat *Cossypha natalensis* and Chorister Robin-Chat *Cossypha dichroa* were dominant at different times, and that they may have moved into Afromontane forests at certain times of the year. At Joubert's both individuals ringed were recaptured indicating that they may have been resident in the area, at least for the period of ringing. However, during censusing, one needs to be aware that detection by calls may bias results.

Species not expected to occur in an area can confirm the presence of a species. The most important in the study was the African Broadbill that was likely breeding in December (Symes & Perrin 2000; Symes & Venter 2002). Further investigation of the status of this species in the region is required.

In this paper I have analysed a seasons ringing at a superficial level. If registered ringers are entering a new region, I suggest they become familiar with the ringing history of the area, especially the most recent decade prior to their arrival. If possible, they can then attempt to continue at sites with a ringing history and possibly yield important longevity data.

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Table 1. Details of ringing sites in this study.

Ringing site	Coords	Habitat	Approx. altitude (m)
Prinsloo's farm (Kurulen), Levubu	23° 07.6S30° 20.4E	Mixed seasonal broad leaved woodland	620
Joubert's farm (Vireers), Levubu	23° 04.3S30° 14.0E	Deciduous secondary forest	720
Albasini Dam, Luvuvhu River, Levubu	23° 06 S30 ° 07 E	Mixed woodland, being cleared for agriculture	780
Horseshoe, Luvuvhu River, Makuya Park	22° 30.9S31° 01.2E	Mixed mopane woodland	300
Tshikuyu, Mutale River Valley	22° 25.6S30° 59.7E	Mixed mopane woodland	300
Tshikondeni village (Koedoelaan)	22° 28 S30 ° 58 E	Semi-urban, bordering on mixed mopane woodland	320

Table 2. results of ringing effort at each site ringed more than once.

Ringing site	Individuals caught	Species caught	Time (min)	Capture rate (birds. hr ⁻¹ .100m ⁻¹ .)
Prinsloo's	67 (4)	29	5 370	1.4
Joubert's	39 (4)	23	5 175	0.9
Horseshoe	86 (3)	26	2 670	4.5
Tshikuyu	50 (2)	19	3 880	2.0
	242 (13)	74	17 095	1.8

Appendix 1. Number of species ringed at each site in this study. Recaptures are given in parentheses. Sites are 1 - Prinsloo's, Levubu; 2 - Joubert's Farm, Levubu; 3 - Albasini Dam, Levubu; 4 - Horseshoe, Makuya Park; 5 - Tshikuyu, Mutale River Valley; 6 - Tshikondeni village.

Species	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Crested Guineafowl		1					1
Cape Turtle-Dove					6		6
Laughing Dove	1						1
Tambourine Dove				2			2
Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove	3		2	7(2)			12
Red-chested Cuckoo		1					1
Speckled Mousebird	2	2					4
Giant Kingfisher				1			1
African Pygmy-Kingfisher	3	1					4
Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill				1			1
Crested Barbet				1			1
Scaly-throated Honeyguide	1	1	1				3
Lesser Honeyguide		2	1				3
Golden-tailed Woodpecker	1						1
Cardinal Woodpecker	1						1
Olive Woodpecker		1					1
African Broadbill		1(1)					1
Fork-tailed Drongo					3		3
Black-headed Oriole					1		1
Dark-capped Bulbul	4	3		7	1		15
Terrestrial Brownbul		1					1
Yellow-bellied Greenbul	4	3		9(1)	1		17
Sombre Greenbul		3(1)					3
Kurriehane Thrush	4(1)			2	3		9
Chorister Robin-Chat		2(2)					2
Red-capped Robin-Chat		2					2
White-throated Robin-Chat	1						1
Bearded Scrub-Robin		1					1
White-browed Scrub-Robin	6(1)		1	4			11
Willow Warbler	3						3

Appendix 1. cont.

Species	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Stierling's Wren-Warbler	4						4
Long-billed Crombec				5			5
Bar-throated Apalis		1	1				2
Yellow-breasted Apalis	2						2
Green-backed Camaroptera	1	4					5
Grey-backed Camaroptera				1	2		3
Rattling Cisticola				8			8
Croaking Cisticola				3			3
Tawny-flanked Prinia	2			2			4
Spotted Flycatcher	2						2
Ashy Flycatcher				1			1
Southern Black Flycatcher					1		1
Cape Batis		1					1
Chin-spot Batis				1			1
Black-throated Wattle-eye				2			2
African Paradise-Flycatcher	2	1					3
Southern Boubou		1	1				2
Black-backed Puffback	3			2			5
Brown-crowned Tchagra	1			3			4
Olive Bush-Shrike			1				1
Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike	1		1				2
Grey-headed Bush-Shrike				2		1	3
White-crested Helmet-Shrike	3			1			4
Retz's Helmet-Shrike				4	1		5
Southern White-crowned Shrike					1		1
Cape Glossy Starling						2	2
Southern Double-collared Sunbird		1					1
White-bellied Sunbird					1		1
Collared Sunbird		2					2
Scarlet-chested Sunbird						5(1)	5
<i>Calamonastes stierlingi</i>							
<i>Sylvietta rufescens</i>							
<i>Apalis thoracica</i>							
<i>Apalis flavida</i>							
<i>Camaroptera brachyura</i>							
<i>Camaroptera brevicaudata</i>							
<i>Cisticola chiniana</i>							
<i>Cisticola natalensis</i>							
<i>Prinia subflava</i>							
<i>Muscicapa striata</i>							
<i>Muscicapa caerulescens</i>							
<i>Melaenornis pammelaina</i>							
<i>Batis capensis</i>							
<i>Batis molitor</i>							
<i>Platysteira peltata</i>							
<i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>							
<i>Laniarius ferrugineus</i>							
<i>Dryoscopus cubla</i>							
<i>Tchagra australis</i>							
<i>Telophorus olivaceus</i>							
<i>Telophorus sulfureopectus</i>							
<i>Malacototus blanchoti</i>							
<i>Prionops plumatus</i>							
<i>Prionops reizei</i>							
<i>Eurocephalus anguitimens</i>							
<i>Lamprotornis nitens</i>							
<i>Cinnyris chalybeus</i>							
<i>Cinnyris talatala</i>							
<i>Hedydipna collaris</i>							
<i>Chalcomitra senegalensis</i>							

Appendix 1 cont.

Species	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Cape White-eye	2(1)	3	1				6
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow				8			8
Spectacled Weaver		1	1	1			3
Red-headed Weaver					1		1
Southern Masked-Weaver	1						1
Yellow Bishop			1				1
Green-winged Pytilia				2	7		9
Jameson's Firefinch				3(1)	9		12
Red-billed Firefinch				1			1
Blue Waxbill				10(1)			10
Streaky-headed Seedeater	2						2
Golden-breasted Bunting	1			1	1	1	4
Number of individuals	66	39	10	86	50	4	256
Recaptures	4	4	0	3	2	0	13
Number of species	24	21	10	23	18	3	72