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GARDEN BIRD RINGING: SOME RINGING AND RECAPTURE DATA OVER A PERIOD OF NINE YEARS

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Ringling projects in the Bloemfontein area concentrated mainly on bird communities at the Oliewenhuis gardens, the Free State National Botanical gardens and other garden bird studies in a few Bloemfontein suburbs (Pellissier, Fichardtpark and Hillsburo) during the 1980's (De Swardt 1992; De Swardt et al. 2004; Herholdt & Earlé 1987; Roos & Roos 1984). The efforts of both the latter two studies were mainly concentrated on Laughing Doves *Streptopelia senegalensis* and Cape Sparrows *Passer melanurus* and several other bird species. This note reports on some suburban garden bird ringling done at a Fleurdal garden in the southern outskirts of Bloemfontein since 2004.

During the past 9 years since August 2004, bird ringling was carried out on an ad hoc basis in a townhouse garden in Fleurdal (29° 09' 11.9"S; 26° 11' 33.8"E), Bloemfontein, central Free State. Seed eating birds were mainly targeted with a walk-in trap baited with seed and insect eating birds with a spring trap baited with mealworms. At times up to 20 or more Laughing Doves were observed visiting the feeding area at a time. Between August 2004 and July 2012 a total of 511 birds were captured and ringed, of which the most frequent captured birds were Laughing Dove (205), Cape Sparrow (142), Red-headed Finch *Amadina erythrocephala* (103) and Common Fiscal *Lanius collaris* (20) (Table 1 & Figure 1). Other interesting birds captured included three familiar Chats *Cercomela familiaris*, Bokmakierie *Telophorus zeylonus* and two Crested Barbets *Trachyponus vaillantii*. Only 2 recaptures of 15 ringed Karoo Thrushes *Turdus smithii* were obtained, suggesting movements in this species. From these data (considering that I was ringling on an ad hoc basis and not monthly), some interesting recapture and

possible turn-over data (for Common Fiscal) were obtained.

A total of 29 recaptures (recapture rate of 5.7%) were obtained, most of these of Laughing Doves and Cape Sparrows (Table 1). The mean monthly elapsed time for Laughing Doves was 10.2 months (n = 11; longest 25 months), and for Cape Sparrows was 4.5 months (n = 11; longest 15 months); only three Common Fiscals were recaptured so far. Two shrikes were resighted several times which became quite tame, being habituated with meal worms put out every morning (Figure 2). One was recaptured after 24 months. Interestingly no Redheaded Finch recaptures were obtained so far although they were first captured in 2009. This probably suggests that this species moves around quite a bit.

Roos & Roos (1984) ringed over 400 Laughing Doves in the Hillsburo suburb (northern outskirts) while Herholdt & Earlé (1987) also ringed over 500 Cape Sparrows over several seasons. No published details are available of these studies or any recaptures or movements. Craig (2007) emphasized the importance of ringling birds in suburban gardens as valuable recapture data were obtained during his study – one Laughing Dove recaptured after 5 years and several other species over periods of 3 – 5 years. Although most Fleurdal recaptures were within a 2 year period, only one Laughing Dove recovery was obtained, but not far from the ringling site. Considerable movements have been recorded in this species, for example one individual (ring no: 596025) recaptured at Oliewenhuis on 26 September 1996 was ringed 8 months earlier at Potchefstroom, North West Province (SAFRING data) and another (ring no: D33411) from a previous ringling site at the Pentagonpark suburb was recovered 25 months later along the Bultfontein road about 7 kilometres away.

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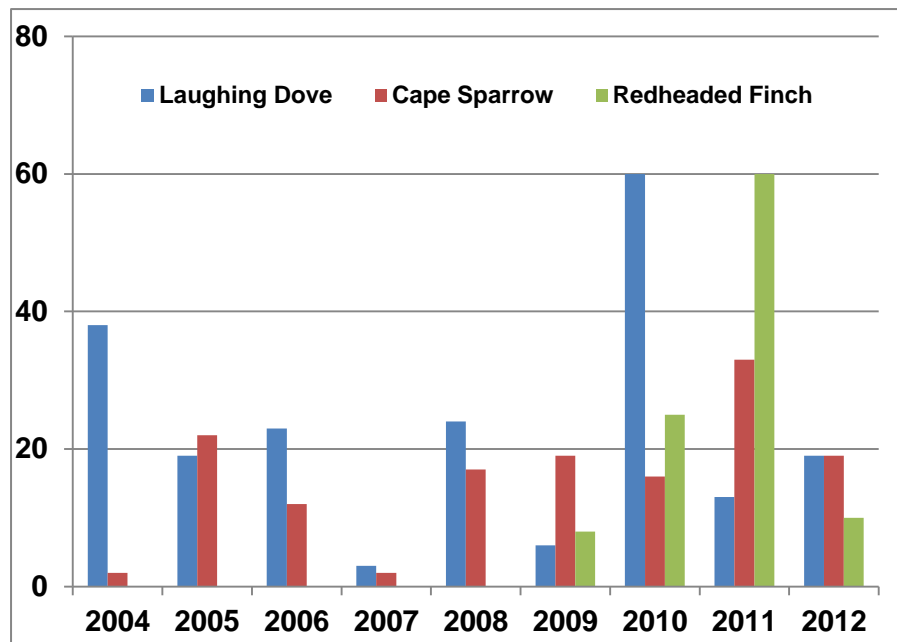


Figure 1. Numbers of seed eating birds ringed at Fleurdal, Bloemfontein between 2004 - 2012



Figure 2. Ringed Common Fiscal (Ring no: 4H44298) recaptured on 22 April 2011 in Fleurdal garden and resighted several times feeding on meal worms.



Table 1. Bird species ringed and recaptured at Fleurdal, Bloemfontein between 2004 – 2012 (Recap = number of recaptures; R rate = recapture rate)

	Ringing totals per year										Total	Recapt	R rate
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013			
Cape Turtle Dove	0	0	2	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	7	1	14.3
Laughing Dove	38	19	23	3	24	6	60	13	19	0	205	11	5.3
Crested Barbet	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2		
Red-eyed Bulbul	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	3		
Familiar Chat	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3		
Cape Robin	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	1	0	0	6	1	16.6
Fiscal Shrike	1	6	0	2	3	1	5	0	2	0	20	3	15
Bokmakierie	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1		
Cape Sparrow	2	22	12	2	17	19	16	33	19	0	142	11	7.7
Masked Weaver	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	3		
Red Bishop	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1		
Red-headed Finch	0	0	0	0	0	8	25	60	10	0	103		
Karoo Thrush	0	0	1	2	4	5	1	0	2	0	15	2	13.3
Totals	42	50	38	10	53	43	112	108	55	0	511	29	5.7