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Afring News online accepts papers containing ringing information about birds. This includes interesting ringing trips, interesting captures, faunistic observations relating to ringing, and analyses of ringing data. It will also consider for publication a variety of other interesting or relevant ornithological material: reports of projects and conferences, and any other interesting or relevant material.



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HYBRID BARN SWALLOW/COMMON HOUSE MARTIN

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HYBRID BARN SWALLOW/COMMON HOUSE MARTIN

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During my Barn Swallow ringing this season I have managed to catch quite a few other species besides the Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica*. Besides the usual weavers, widows, etc, there have been a couple of Red-headed Quelea *Quelea erythrops* males (in full breeding plumage) and a female (with a brood patch).

Other hirundine species and relatives have included Lesser Striped Swallows *H. abyssinica* (being the most common), a single Greater Striped Swallow *H. cucullata* (a first sighting for me on the coast of southern KZN, common from about 20km inland), Black Sawwings *Psalidoprocne holomelas*, White-throated Swallow *H. albigularis* (adult and immature birds), Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*, a couple of Banded Martin *H. cincta* (also a first record for the coast, normally only seen 60km's inland), Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum*, Little Swift *Apus affinis* and White-rumped Swift *A. caffer*.

Another bird was added to this list on 19 February 2014 when I caught a Hybrid Barn Swallow/Common House Martin. This particular bird appeared to be more House Martin than Barn Swallow even though the measurements fall within the two species, the bird felt substantially smaller than the Barn Swallow (Table 1).

The bird was blue on the back which was to be expected as this matches both species (Fig. 1-4). The tarsus and hind claw, however, had partial feathering compared to the House Martin which has full feathering on the tarsus and all claws. The tail had no sign of any streamers (even though the bird was in moult) and the tail feathers had no white windows which the Barn Swallow has. The rump also had a mottled white band compared to the House Martin's full white band. The biggest give-away, however, was the throat which was a paler colour than that of the Barn Swallow and a very small (fairly undetectable) band below the red colour. The red patch on the forehead was also absent.

Table 1: Measurements of the hybrid compared to that of adult House Martins and Barn Swallows (own data)

	House Martin	Barn Swallow	Hybrid
Mass (g)	15	17-20	16
Wing (mm)	107-113	117-124	115
Tail (mm)	57	>65	60

Even though this hybrid is not uncommon, as there are numerous records of them inter-breeding, it was a first for me. A friend who has between 10 and 12 Barn Swallow nests in his barn in Finland recorded his first hybrid two seasons ago, and out of 250 000 Barn Swallows ringed in Finland over the last 10 years, there have been 236 hybrids ringed, so these two species are known to inter-breed in Europe.

Editor's note:

The SAFRING species number for the Barn Swallow/Common House Martin hybrid is 10030.

Andrew has written about his ringing at Umzumbe previously, see: Pickles A. 2012. Umzumbe River floodplain as a constant ringing site. Afring News 41:19-21

http://safring.adu.org.za/v1/downloads/afrn_41_19.pdf



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Figure 1: Barn Swallow/Common House Martin hybrid.



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Figure 3: Barn Swallow/Common House Martin hybrid, rump



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Figure 2: Barn Swallow/Common House Martin hybrid, showing partial feathering



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Figure 4: Barn Swallow/Common House Martin hybrid, tail