

Afring News

An electronic journal published by SAFRING, Animal Demography Unit at the University of Cape Town



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.



Editor: H. Dieter Oschadleus

WESTERLY RANGE EXTENSION OF KNYSNA WOODPECKER, *CAMPATHERA NOTATA*

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Recommended citation format: Ford MA. 2015. Westerly range extension of Knysna Woodpecker, *Campathera notata*. Afring News 44: 16

URL: <http://safring.adu.org.za/content.php?id=14>

Published online: 15 December 2015



WESTERLY RANGE EXTENSION OF KNYSNA WOODPECKER, *CAMPATHERA NOTATA*

Michael A Ford

Michael Ford (Safring Ringer 1222) is based in Hermanus, Overberg, Western Cape, and specialising in the study of nectarivores, mainly the Cape Sugarbird, *Promerops cafer*.

The Knysna Woodpecker, *Campathera notata*, is an uncommon species found in a restricted coastal range and habitat between Oribi Gorge, southern KZN, in the east, and De Hoop Nature Reserve, Agulhas, Cape in the west. The epicentre of its distribution is along the Garden route, where it is the dominant woodpecker species, along with Olive Woodpecker, *Mesopicos griseocephalus*, and Cardinal Woodpecker, *Dendropicos fuscescens*, both of which have far less restricted ranges.

I conduct regular ringing sessions at my permanent site in the Fernkloof Nature Reserve, Hermanus, Overberg, (34°23'S 19°16'E) placing mist-nets in the fringe areas between the botanical gardens and the adjoining protea fynbos, with the objective of ringing nectivores, principally Cape Sugarbirds, plus Orange-breasted, Malachite, Amethyst and Southern Double-collared Sunbirds.

During one such session, early on 2 December, 2015, I heard a number of different alarm calls emanating from the nets, and on checking found that a "bird party" consisting of 9 different species had been netted in a single 12 metre net.

Amongst the regular species caught there were two woodpeckers, firstly an adult male Cardinal and, much to my surprise, an adult male Knysna Woodpecker. This bird was ringed with ring number 4H33876 and released after taking the usual measurements and several photographs.

On checking the SAFRING database for this species it was established that the previous furthest westerly ringing record was from De Hoop Nature Reserve Agulhas, 125 kilometres to the east,

although the SABAP2 database records sightings from the Gansbaai and Franskraal area, which is only 60 kilometres to the east, and one from Greyton, 60 kilometres to the north-east.

In light of several other species that have recently undergone range expansions into the south-western Cape and Overberg, namely Southern Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer griseus*, Streaky-headed Seedeater *Serinus gularis*, and Amethyst Sunbird *Nectarinia amethystina*, the question is raised as to whether this is another such example, or simply a vagrant to the region. More records, or the lack thereof, will no doubt help to answer this question over time.

References

Roberts Birds of Southern Africa edited by PAR Hockey, WRJ Dean and PG Ryan.
SAFRING and SABAP2 databases, University of Cape Town, Animal demography Unit.

