

REPORT ON THIRD NATIONAL RINGING WORKSHOP: CINTSA

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Cintsa in a nutshell: hot, humid, long walks between venues, exchange of ideas and techniques; Gonubie: thousands of swallows and a few other birds. The Workshop was held from 7th to 9th March 1997 at Cintsa Nature Reserve, Eastern Cape Province, and was attended by experienced ringers, trainees and novices from South Africa and Namibia. Time was allocated to ringing, demonstrations of equipment and techniques, slide shows and talks. A European Swallow roost at Gonubie was targeted on Saturday and Sunday.

167 species were seen and/or heard at Cintsa but no more than 124 birds of only 40 species were ringed. Some excitement was provided by a European Cuckoo that flaunted itself at Cintsa East, but all attempts to net it were in vain! It was a superb venue for kingfishers however, with 23 birds of five species being caught at the two sites. The Gonubie outings yielded 282 European Swallows and 190 other birds including 129 Spottedbacked Weavers.

Disappointment was expressed by several of ringers about the low species variety and numbers of birds caught. On the other hand, the low level of netting and ringing activity meant more time for teaching trainees and novices.

Demonstrations included torching by Tony Tree, the use of stomach pump by Paul Martin, a zap trap net modified from George Underhill's original design by Pat Hulley, wader nets by Tony Tree, and various poles and guy systems by Paul Martin, Adrian Craig, and Rick Nuttall. The slide shows and talks covered a wide range of topics, from Kenyan experiences to moults, ageing and sexing.

Some incidents that were really memorable, at least to this writer:

- Thousands of swallows appearing from nowhere to roost in the reedbeds at Gonubie.

- A pair of Crowned Cranes with chicks, also at Gonubie.
- A practical demonstration by Tony Tree on how to release an unringed Whitefronted Plover chick through a hole in the keep bag.
- Special mention must also be made of Monica and Dries Nel who ended up with most of the weaver-filled bird bags at Gonubie while everyone else was ringing European Swallows.

A big thank you to all the experienced ringers who found time to talk to, and teach, the trainees and novices. There was a free flow of information between the delegates that was heartening. The single shortcoming was the distance between the two venues, hampering interaction between the two groups.

Paul Martin and Adrian Craig are to be congratulated for a successful workshop.

ADVANCE NOTICE PORT ELIZABETH FOLLOW-UP

As a follow-on to the National Ringing Workshop, the Eastern Capers decided to get together for training sessions about twice a year. We are hoping to have a ringing training session in Port Elizabeth on the weekend of 26-28 September 1997.

The itinerary will include torch-netting plovers, wader and tern netting as well as morning sessions in Settlers' Park and the Aloe Reserve.

If you would like to attend, please contact:

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