

LETTERS & NOTICES

Dear Sir,

I would like to comment on a number of aspects of vol 9, Nos. 1 and 2 of SAFRING NEWS. I am sorry Mr. Patrick Morant is to leave the SAFRING desk. He has been a kind and helpful administrator. It is to be hoped that his departure will be more of a local movement rather than migration or dispersal. Those of us who know Mr. Terry Oatley from Natal are pleased at his appointment and wish him a long and profitable stay.

There seems to be a statistically significant increase in the mass of SAFRING NEWS, hopefully this trend will increase.

The editors, in re-typing the manuscripts for reproduction, left out the lady in the bird of my life. The Long-tailed Wagtail was shortened to *Motacilla torrentium*, with clara omitted. The name should have read *Motacilla clara torrentium*. Clara hints at the beauty and grace of this little bird while torrentum yields a clue as to its habitat.

Dr. D. Whitelaw's suggested coding scheme for recording the crop contents does not easily lend itself to computerisation as it is wasteful of space (p 44). I would suggest the following modification:-

DR. WHITELAW'S CODES	SUGGESTED COMPUTER CODE	MEANING
(Not Given)	- or blank	Not recorded
0	0	Nothing left in crop
+	1	Small mobile mass, 1 cm
++	2	Mobile mass, 1 & 2 cm
+++	3	Mass not mobile, easily felt
++++	4	Crop bulging

The inclusion of the "-" or " " (i.e. blank) for the case when no data are recorded is important in subsequent statistical analyses. The scheme suggested above will take up only one column on a punched card while Dr. Whitelaw's will take four.

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Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio porphyrio* photographed by Mike Fagan in the Olifantsvlei Nature Reserve, Johannesburg.

The bird was caught in a walk-in rail trap.