

EDITORIAL

OVERCOMING ISOLATION

It is almost certain that one of the major drags on the development of ringing in southern Africa is lack of contact between ringers. Contact means exchange of views, swapping of techniques, brushing up on details of birds in the hand and dovetailing research efforts. Where ringers become isolated, they become out of date and lose touch with the latest developments.

I have been fortunate in being able to work with a lot of ringers in the field and hope to do more of this in the future. I have picked up ideas for improving my equipment and benefitted from other ringers' detailed knowledge of their specialist species. I have attempted to learn the method Tony Tree uses for tying up his mist-net loops. With David Skead's help, I have practised sexing duck at Barberspan. I have felt the temperature of the winter water at Westdene, Benoni. I have seen John Lodder's ring dispenser, and Underhill's holding boxes. But I have been luckier than most ringers in the country.

The first step to beating isolation is the formation of local ringing groups of amateurs. This is already working well but it seems to me that on the local scene, more contact is required between the professionals and the amateurs. Ringing is almost always more effective when it is carried out by a group of ringers. Professional organisations seldom have more than one or two experienced ringers on whose services they can call. Perhaps the professionals should contemplate calling more often for the assistance of experienced amateurs.

The second step has, we hope, been taken by the production of this magazine. We hope that 'Ringling News' will serve as a dispenser of information and ideas between ringers who normally will never meet. We hope that ringers will send in articles on their particular ringing places, the techniques they have developed and letters on those that are printed. 'Ringling News' will be issued initially three times a year. We ask for articles which carry detailed information but presented in a readable style, not too scientifically sterile.

Lastly I would like to suggest that an attempt be made to get ringers together to meet each other at a Ringers' Conference. It is suggested that this should be held once every two years. Enclosed with this first issue, you will find a questionnaire. I would be grateful if this could be completed and returned to the Ringling Unit as soon as possible.