

# FIRST CAPTURE DATES OF LESSER HONEYGUIDES AT TWO LOCALITIES IN THE SOUTHWESTERN CAPE PROVINCE

G D Underhill<sup>1</sup> & L G Underhill<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>12 Roseberry Road, MOWBRAY, 7700

<sup>2</sup>Avian Demography Unit, Dept of Statistical Sciences, University of Cape Town, RONDEBOSCH, 7700

The first breeding record of the Lesser Honeyguide *Indicator minor* in the southwestern Cape Province was in December 1985 (Steyn & Myburgh 1986). Hockey *et al.* (1989) considered the Lesser Honeyguide to be an uncommon summer visitor, or possibly a resident in the region. They listed it as a species that has expanded its range in the region and suggested that this was related to the range expansion of its host, the Pied Barbet *Lybius leucomelas*. The range of the barbet expanded most rapidly during the 1960s and 1970s, but continued into the 1980s (Macdonald 1986). In turn, the expansion of Pied Barbets into the fynbos region of the southwestern Cape has been attributed to the spread of alien trees, especially Australian *Acacia* spp. (Macdonald 1986).

Unfortunately, with one exception, there appear to be no long-term ringing studies that documented the arrival of Pied Barbets at a locality in the southwestern Cape Province. Dr D Whitelaw started regular ringing at a smallholding near Sir Lowry's Pass Village in January 1974, and trapped a Pied Barbet for the first time in August 1982 and two more in January 1983 (Macdonald 1986).

However, the timing of the arrival of the Lesser Honeyguide, a brood parasite of the Pied Barbet, at two localities near Cape Town, is better known. These localities are Rondevlei Bird Sanctuary, 34°04'S, 18°30'E (Table 1) and Durbanville Nature Reserve 33°50'S, 18°38'E (Table 2) where our study started in July 1986 with at least one ringing session in almost every month since May 1989 (Underhill & Underhill 1990).

Pied Barbets had expanded their range to these sites by July 1986 (Tables 1 and 2). At Rondevlei, barbets were first seen in 1969, next in 1973, and were considered a breeding resident by 1983 (Macdonald 1986).

The first Lesser Honeyguide trapped at Rondevlei was on 13 August 1989, and a total of 10 had been trapped there by May 1992. At Durbanville, the earliest date was 30 March 1990, and the total was 15 (including one retrap).

Dates of captures are listed in Table 3, and show a tendency to be clustered. For example, at Rondevlei, there were three captures during August and September 1989, with a gap of nine months until the next capture. Lesser Honeyguides have been trapped in each month of the year except November (Table 4). The suggestion in Table 4 that there is a peak in March-April-May at Durbanville and in August-September at Rondevlei is misleading, as these are the periods when more frequent ringing sessions were held at the respective localities.

Only one of the 24 Lesser Honeyguides was recaptured. A bird caught at Durbanville on 7 July 1990 was retrapped there on 2 February 1991, with 11 intervening trapping sessions. The recapture rate is one of the lowest for any species at Rondevlei or Durbanville (GDU unpubl. data). For example, 44% and 25% of Pied Barbets ringed at Rondevlei and Durbanville, respectively, were subsequently retrapped. This suggests that the species is subject to extensive local movement.

TABLE 1

NUMBERS OF LESSER HONEYGUIDES AND PIED BARBETS TRAPPED AT RONDEVLEI BIRD SANCTUARY IN  
RELATION TO RINGING EFFORT

YEAR	RINGING SESSIONS	TOTAL NO. OF BIRDS CAUGHT	LESSER HONEYGUIDES		PIED BARBETS	
			NO. CAUGHT	PERCENTAGE	NO. CAUGHT	PERCENTAGE
1986/87 <sup>1</sup>	4	306	0	0	6	2,0
1987/88	4	92	0	0	8	8,7
1988/89	11	815	0	0	5	0,6
1989/90	21	1329	3	0,22	19	1,4
1990/91	29	1793	5	0,28	10	0,6
1991/92	25	1655	2	0,12	6	0,4

<sup>1</sup> 1 July 1986 - 30 June 1987

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TABLE 2

NUMBERS OF LESSER HONEYGUIDES AND PIED BARBETS TRAPPED AT DURBANVILLE NATURE RESERVE IN  
RELATION TO RINGING EFFORT

YEAR	RINGING SESSIONS	TOTAL NO. OF BIRDS CAUGHT	LESSER HONEYGUIDES		PIED BARBETS	
			NO. CAUGHT	PERCENTAGE	NO. CAUGHT	PERCENTAGE
1986/87	2	65	0	0	2	3,1
1987/88	8	304	0	0	2	0,7
1988/89	9	453	0	0	2	0,4
1989/90	37	1806	4	0,22	16	0,9
1990/91	32	1932	6	0,31	12	0,6
1991/92	25	1489	4	0,27	11	0,7

TABLE 3

DATES ON WHICH LESSER HONEYGUIDES WERE TRAPPED AT RONDEVLEI BIRD SANCTUARY AND  
DURBANVILLE NATURE RESERVE

**Rondevlei Bird Sanctuary:**

13 August 1989, 17 September 1989, 25 September 1989, 2 July 1990, 21 August 1990, 8 October 1990, 29 January 1991, 1 June 1991, 4 January 1992, 14 February 1992.

**Durbanville Nature Reserve:**

30 March 1990, 11 May 1990, 24 May 1990, 31 May 1990, 7 September 1990, 18 December 1990, 22 December 1990, 2 February 1991, 5 March 1991, 26 March 1991, 25 April 1991, 14 March 1992, 4 April 1992, 24 April 1992, 13 May 1992.

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TABLE 4

MONTHLY DISTRIBUTION OF LESSER HONEYGUIDES TRAPPED AT RONDEVLEI BIRD SANCTUARY AND  
DURBANVILLE NATURE RESERVE

LOCALITY	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOTAL
RONDEVLEI	2	1				1	1	2	2	1			10
DURBANVILLE		1	4	3	4				1			2	15

However, the captures during the winter period points to the presence of Lesser Honeyguides near Cape Town throughout the year, so the status description "uncommon summer visitor", based largely on the fact that none were reported in June or July during the 1982-1986 fieldwork period for the southwestern Cape Province bird atlas, should be revised to "present throughout the year, and subject to considerable local movement".

#### REFERENCES

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