

subnormal. To check on this the author searched for Willow Warblers caught in flight by Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora* and cached behind rocks. The fat reserves of these birds were analysed and the body-mass calculated; results showed that the mistnetted samples were representative of the birds passing through in their autumnal migration. The flight-range calculations therefore seem to be soundly based. The fact that Willow and Garden

Warblers do nevertheless successfully cross the inhospitable barrier of the Sahara is evidently due to tail winds which are prevalent at the time of autumnal (southward) migration.

There is a lot of stimulating material in this volume and the reference section of each paper provides a useful guide to further reading.

Terry Oatley

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KANIA, W. 1989. Brood desertion by Great Tits *Parus major* caught at the nest. *Acta Ornithologica* 25: 77-105.

"In many ethological and ecological investigations there is a need to catch the owners of a particular nest. However, catching these birds may lead to their abandoning the nest. It is well known that the frequency of nest desertion varies in different species and depends on the stage of development that eggs or nestlings have reached, on the weather, the researcher's conduct, and other circumstances. Nevertheless, there is little definite information on this problem in the literature. The researcher thus has no alternative but to gain experience by himself, by trial and error. And errors here signify the abandonment of eggs or nestlings by the parent. I believe that people who have acquired knowledge at such a cost have a moral duty to share it with others".

So writes Dr Wojciech Kania, well-known Polish ornithologist, in the introduction to his paper. He analyses the consequences of 900 captures of Great Tits on their nests in two study areas in Poland. Males, caught while feeding nestlings, did not desert nests

after capture, but incubating females abandoned nests in 14% and 29% of cases in the respective study areas, and twice as often at the start of incubation as at the end. Desertions were more frequent following capture after 17h00 (43%) than between noon and 17h00 (21%) or before noon (0-8%). Replacement clutches were deserted more frequently (55%) than others (22%). Females touched, but not caught, in order to read their ring numbers did not desert. In such cases the front of the nestbox was raised and "the edge of the nest depressed with the fingers to reveal the leg of the incubating bird, in some cases gently pulling the leg out from under the bird and rotating the ring. Sometimes the bird did not react, sometimes it jumped away to the rear of the box ... If the bird attempted to fly out of the nestbox, which is what happened most often, it was not impeded."

There is a great deal more in this very comprehensive paper and Kania makes good his obligation to share his experience in this field. It is an enlightening and cautionary account of what can happen when, for the sake of the study, the need to mark each bird

transcends other considerations. Use of nestboxes facilitates the trapping of birds on their nests, but the technique is rarely used in southern Africa. Nevertheless, the risk of desertions following capture potentially applies to

all hole nesters as well as to species building enclosed nests, such as, for example, the stripe-breasted swallows.

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BENNETT, G.F., EARLÉ, R.A., DU TOIT, H. & HUCHZERMEYER, F.W. 1992. A Host-parasite catalogue of the haematozoa of the sub-Saharan birds. *Onderstepoort J. Vet. Res.* 59: 1-73.

Beauty, it is said, is in the eye of the beholder. Anyone who has more than a nodding acquaintance with a parasitologist will know the truth of these words and perhaps only those who study blood parasites can become truly enthusiastic about them. This catalogue represents a monumental amount of labour. It is designed, in the authors' own words, "primarily for the parasitologist and non-ornithologist".

Bird hosts are arranged in alphabetic order of family, genus and finally species; 826 species of 73 families (including palearctic migrants to the Afrotropical zone) have been examined. Ornithologists will find some of the avian nomenclature rather quaint, but this does not detract from the value of the catalogue, which pulls together into one publication the disparate records of examinations of nearly 17 000 birds from throughout sub-Saharan Africa. The catalogue provides an informative and readable introduction, 2 pages of colour plates and 1½ pages of B & W plates and diagrams of blood parasites, a 5½ page reference section and an

index to families and genera of avian hosts. The main body of the text provides lists, annotated lists and comprehensive tables that enable one to determine very quickly what birds are known to host any particular blood parasite or which blood parasites have been found in any particular species of bird of those so far examined.

There are some intriguing questions posed by the lists. Why, for example, should white-eyes (328 of 540 samples positive = 60%) show a higher prevalence of blood parasites than, say, sunbirds (187/477 = 39%) or bulbuls (276/1131 = 24%)? Perhaps these figures are artifacts of small samples; 17 000 birds examined might seem a large number but it is vanishingly small when measured against the unknowably vast number of potential host individuals alive in sub-Saharan Africa. In *Safring News* 20 the senior authors made a request for ringers to collect more African material. Dr Roy Earlé is himself a ringer of course, and it is good to read that at least three other ringers, Dawie de Swardt, Kotie Herholdt and Walter Nesper have been collecting blood smears from birds and have their efforts duly acknowledged in this catalogue.

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