

GUEST EDITORIAL

I have just returned from attending the very successful symposium on **Migration, Dispersal and Nomadism**, organised by Les Underhill and Terry Oatley for the SAOS and held at Langebaan from 12-16 September. The papers presented at the meeting will appear in *Ostrich* in due course and I will not comment further on them except to say that more than half the papers delivered were by people from outside southern Africa – a tribute to the organisers.

On the Sunday before the symposium started I participated in a workshop on the **Future of Ringing in South Africa** that was organised by Aldo Berruti, Les Underhill and Terry Oatley. At the invitation of the SAFRING I attended as a consultant from another southern hemisphere country with a very similar ecology and similar logistical problems. As a retired Research Ornithologist with some forty years experience and as the longest surviving bander (ringer) under the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme, it was hoped that I might have something constructive to add to the proceedings. I hope that I did!

One of the seven deadly sins is Envy and I must confess that I envy the SAOS and SAFRING for their efficiency and organisation; two things stand out in my memory.

First, the apparent harmony that exists between the provincial bird clubs and your national SAOS is an example that we (Australian RAOU) have regarded as a major miracle and our long-term aim. Second, the organisation and administration of your ringing scheme reminds me of the happy days when we, too, had a humane, kindly, interested

administrator. Alas, he was discarded to be replaced by successive bureaucrats – well-meaning perhaps, but distant, non-birders apparently intent on disciplining the amateur! These are two treasures that you have; I trust you appreciate them and enjoy them for many years to come.

To the detail of the workshop: my comments were those of a colour-ringing addict of more than forty years standing and I make no apology for this.

I realise that the massive bird migrations from Europe and Asia provide you with a very exciting form of ringing activity that we in Australia can only experience with waders. However, there is still so much to be found out about the life histories of your endemics (as there is with ours). Southern hemisphere bush birds seem to live for much longer than their northern hemisphere equivalents, to have smaller clutches and to be multi-brooded much more often. Only when detailed life history studies have been completed, with the mating system and social behaviour of a species unravelled, can the graphs and tables of avian demography be interpreted fully.

I realise we cannot possibly study all our endemics in detail. Just one or two studies would reinforce the feeling that "our" birds do not behave in the same ways as their northern hemisphere opposite numbers.

So much ground was covered during the full day workshop that I cannot possibly comment on every aspect, nor is that necessary since the Southern African Ringing Scheme seems to be running smoothly and achieving a measure of efficiency in the handling of ringing data

that, again, makes me very envious. Things that do stand out in my memory are the possible inclusion of a National Ringing Authority issued by SAFRING in accordance with the standards approved by SAOS, that would be a necessary preliminary before a provincial permit to catch birds was issued – as we use in Australia (see below for example of my card, front and back). That an annual ringing Camp-Out at a biologically significant area might serve as a training ground for new recruits to ringing, a place for people with similar interests to exchange ideas, assess new trapping methods and enable the standardisation of measurement techniques – and have a pleasant holiday. And one event in particular will be remembered by me for a long time, namely when Pertti Saurola from Finland (the head of EURING) emphasised the importance of the amateur in achieving long-term

lifehistory studies. As I remember it, he said "only the amateur has the time to embark on such long-term studies." I heartily agree with him; it is high time that certain professionals began to appreciate the very valuable role of the amateur.

I feel that we in the southern hemisphere need to discard some of the northern textbooks – to gather our own data and generate our own theories. Towards the end of the Langebaan meeting several of us were discussing the prospect of a meeting in Australia (Alice Springs?) in 1997 with a theme of **Southern hemisphere ornithology – let's rewrite the textbooks**. 1997 is a long way away – start saving now!

Ian Rowley

BIRD BANDING AUTHORITY
 AUSTRALIAN BIRD BANDING SCHEME
 G.P.O. BOX 8
 CANBERRA ACT 2601



This is to certify that:

MR ICR ROWLEY CLASSA
 CSIRO NO 5
 LOCKED BAG 4 POST OFFICE ISSUED 10 DEC 1993
 MIDLAND WA 6056 EXPIRES 30 JUN 1994
 ENDORSEMENT: MIST-NETS AND CANNON NETS

is authorized to use ANPWS bird bands subject to the conditions on the reverse of this authority.

James Cook
 Secretary, Australian Bird Banding Scheme

CONDITIONS OF AUTHORISATION

1. ANPWS bands are not to be placed on any species of protected fauna by the holder unless the holder is in possession of written permission to do so from the fauna authority of the State or Territory in which the holder is operating.
2. The fauna laws pertaining to banding in the State or Territory in which the holder is operating are to be observed at all times.
3. The holder is required to conduct all banding activities in conformity with the instructions issued by the Secretary of the Australian Banding Scheme.
4. This authority expires on the date shown, unless cancelled earlier.

I agree to abide by these conditions.

Ian Rowley
 (Holder of Authority)